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ABSTRACT

The apparently simple question of whether there are commonly accepted "best practices" for infant and toddler care leads to further questions regarding the nature of childhood and the impact of cultural values. This report reviews recent theory, training, and practice in the care of children outside their homes. Section 1 of the report argues that much of current knowledge about infancy is derived from the normative context established in Anglo-North American child development studies. This section considers these predominant assumptions and their implications for practice. The legacy of attachment theory is analyzed, especially the assumption that out-of-home care is less desirable than care by mothers. This section further argues that the child-centered approach and desirability of structured play reinforces individualism. Section 2 of the report explores European traditions of theory and practice. This section describes five parameters of practice, focusing on ideas about: (1) the nature of relationships between adults and very young children; (2) children as learners; (3) health and well-being; (4) training employment for those who work with young children; and (5) ecology and the environment. The report also illustrates the program content in European settings, the importance of language diversity, the concern with the environment and its impact on programming, and the emphasis on developing values of non-aggression and cooperation by promoting interactions between children. (KB)

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CHILDCARE RESOURCE AND RESEARCH UNIT

HOW SHOULD WE CARE FOR BABIES AND TODDLERS? AN ANALYSIS OF PRACTICE IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE FOR CHILDREN UNDER THREE

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How should we care for babies and toddlers? An analysis of practice in out-of-home care for children under three

Helen Penn
Social Science Research Unit
Institute of Education
London University

June 1999

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Childcare Resource & Research Unit
Centre for Urban & Community Studies
University of Toronto
455 Spadina Avenue, Room 305
Toronto ON M5S 2G8, Canada
TEL: 416-978-6895
FAX: 416-971-2139
E-MAIL: crru@chass.utoronto.ca
WEBSITE: www.childcarecanada.org

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About the author

When this paper was written, Dr. Helen Penn was Senior Research Fellow at the Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London. In 1999 she was appointed a professor in early childhood education at the University of East London. She has worked extensively in Europe and co-authored or drafted some of the publications of the European Childcare Network, as well as carrying out a comparative study of nursery provision in Spain, Italy and the UK, *Comparing Nurseries* (Paul Chapman publishers 1997) and is co-author of Transforming Nursery Education (1996, Paul Chapman publishers) with Peter Moss. Her new book *Early Childhood Services: Theory, Policy and Practice* will be published by the Open University Press this year. Most recently she has been working in developing and transitional countries including South Africa and Mongolia, as well as in Eastern Europe. Dr. Penn is an avid gardener, and is author of *An English Woman's Garden*.

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Preface

It is a pleasure to introduce this report to the Canadian and North American audience. While some Canadians and Americans have been reconsidering ECE guidelines and arrangements, Penn brings a European perspective to bear on the problem. Further, she is aware of issues of child care and cultural practices around the world. From this broad-based perspective, Penn critically examines a number of components of child care for infants and toddlers. Some of the most important topics include attachment theory, gender roles, values, ratio and primary caregiver considerations.

To give a brief example, Penn develops a critique of Developmentally Appropriate Guidelines and other such tools as reflective of North American market economy ideology. Not only are the individualistic values in the guidelines critiqued but the way in which the guidelines are used to cajole the practices into being improved are seen as based on the assumption that the levels of practice are likely to be substandard. Thus, the low pay and high turnover of caregivers in North America can be understood as a symptom of a culture that does not view its children as having basic entitlements.

A second example is Penn's analysis of the legacy of attachment theory and how it has affected practices. Attachment theory has involved the official endorsement of stay-at-home mother as the best type of care and has implicitly downgraded all other forms of care as less than desirable. Further, where out-of-home care is necessary, the idealized family unit is still mimicked. Attempts to set up key providers, or what we call Primary Caregivers to closely bond with the children reflect this preoccupation. Without downplaying the importance of adult-child connections, Penn draws on evidence which suggests that even very young children can delight in each others' company, and gives examples of how child care can be set up in such a way to maximize peer group supportiveness.

Penn draws our attention to the unexamined cultural values of competitive individualism that are pervasive in early childhood guidelines and practices in North America. From a European viewpoint, she argues that the child-centered approach and the desirability of structured play approaches spelt out in North American guidelines can be seen as reinforcements of the highly individualist values of mainstream culture.

In Europe, by contrast, many countries have long histories of infant child care, and practice has been developed and refined over the years. The paper shows how in those European countries with substantial social and economic investment in children, and

state-funded services for children and families, administrators now have little need for detailed guidelines on practice and can presume that caregivers and teachers are committed and will work out the details successfully.

The paper also illustrates how the content of many programmes differs in a European context. Since there are a number of major, and many more minor, languages, language diversity is a significant issue, and has been addressed in many ways. In the Nordic countries in particular, there is a paramount concern with the environment, with ecologically sound buildings, continuous access to natural environments, and curricular emphasis on cherishing the environment for others.

Additionally, by promoting interactions between children, the values of non-aggression and cooperation are stressed. This extract from a Finnish Ministry document neatly illustrates the point:

> *special attention is given to the need for daycare that implants in the child a sense of social responsibility, understanding the need for peace, and concern for the environment*

All of those involved with issues of infant care can benefit from reflecting on these incisive comparisons between North American infant in out-of-home care situations and those in European countries.

Judith K. Bernhard
Ryerson Polytechnic University
School of Early Childhood Education

INTRODUCTION

A brief history of policies and practices

How should we care for babies and toddlers ? Is there commonly accepted "best practice"? Are there best or better ways of relating to babies and infants, providing activities for them, and planning and organizing their routines ? This apparently simple question has been answered with definitiveness in North American texts such as *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8*[1] and the Harms, Cryer and Clifford *Infant-Toddler Rating Scale*[2]. Clear lists of criteria for good practice have been drawn up, claiming to translate the most recent developmental psychology literature into guidance on daily practice with young children. Training credentials for child care workers are based on these criteria, and it is now possible to qualify as a child care worker in many English speaking countries on the basis of work based assessment, that is performance at work in fulfilling the preset criteria for "good practice".

Yet the issues are anything but straightforward. There have been major reversals of practice even within recent history. As Barbara Tizard[3] has pointed out:

> *Between the end of the second world war and the mid-seventies, Western psychologists saw the socialization of under threes almost entirely in terms of the mother-child relationship. The central theme was the crucial and enduring importance of a secure mother child attachment. Fathers were hardly mentioned, peer relationships were not seen to be of any importance at this age, whilst siblings were relevant only as rivals for maternal attention (p.1.)*

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[1](ed)Bredekamp, S.(1989 edition). *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs: Serving Children from Birth Through Age 8*. Washington. National Association for the Education of Young Children

[2]Harms, T., Cryer, D., Clifford, R. (1990). *Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale*. New York. Teachers College Press.

[3]Tizard, B. (1986). *The Care of Young Children: Implications of Recent Research*. London. Institute of Education. TCRU Working Paper. No.1.

Christina Hardyment[4] has shown how historically the advice given to mothers and other carers about how to bring up children has been constant only in its changes, and the wisdom of one generation has become the disgraced folklore of the next. Nikolas Rose has convincingly traced how the psychological assessment of children has arisen in response to particular ideologies and political conditions, rather than as an independent branch of knowledge. Eugenic and neo-hygienist arguments were dominant in the first decades of the century, when the force of welfare and education intervention with young children was directed at making sure mothers kept their infants clean and well-nourished. Then, in the wake of Freud, emotions were discovered and the family was seen as an emotional environment, and children's problems became a symptom of family malfunctioning and bad family relationships. Professional expertise was dedicated to improving these relationships both at home, and in a nursery context.[5]

In contemporary Anglo-American literature at least, the notion of the family has broadened. Now it is primarily seen as a learning environment, where the job of the mother, as well as inculcating good behavioural habits, is to stimulate the child, and to make sure she learns as much as possible as fast as possible. A plethora of new programmes in countries as diverse as Turkey[6] and the UK[7] are based on the principle that early intervention is a cost-effective means of reducing poverty, and early cognitive stimulation of infants in especially designed supportive day care projects, usually involving parents in various kinds of parent education, bring about dramatic long term results.[8]

In a welfare context, state intervention was and still is targeted primarily at poor communities, poverty typically being diagnosed as a symptom of malfunctioning rather than as a cause of it. However, yet another strand of provision concerns mothers at work, and the extent to which the state system recognizes the need, and takes responsibility for the provision of day care for working women. Many continental day

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[4]Hardyment, C. (1984) *Dream Babies: Child Care from Locke to Spock*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.

[5]Rose, N. (1985) *The Psychological Complex: Psychology, politics and society in England 1869-1939*. London. Routledge.

[6]Bekman, S. (1998). *A Fair Chance: An evaluation of the mother-child education program*. Istanbul. Mother-Child Education Foundation Publication no 13/ Van Leer Foundation.

[7]The British Government, in 1998, announced a new $340 million *Sure Start* programme intended to provide co-ordinated care and welfare services for young children and their families for children aged 0-3 in deprived areas.

[8](eds) Thurman, S.K, Cornwell, J.R., and Gottwald, S.R.(1997). *Contexts of Early Intervention: Systems and Settings*. Baltimore. Paul Brookes Publishing.

care systems were developed primarily for the children of working mothers, rather than as a welfare resource, although of course they invariably reflected other welfare concerns. Carolyn Adams and Kathryn Winston provide an interesting comparative historical account of the development of public policies to support working women in three very different countries, the USA, Sweden and China.[9] Whilst the USA accepted little responsibility for the children of working mothers, Sweden saw such provision as part of a comprehensive, rather than targeted, state welfare system, whilst China, like other ex-communist systems nursed the ambitious hope of transforming society and creating good citizens of our country by attending to the education and welfare of all children, physically and mentally, by taking them out of the home and using collective day care as a means of instilling new ideas.[10]

Ben Bradley[11] in his stimulating account of the psychology of babyhood, convincingly argues that babyhood is controversial in psychological as well as historical terms. What is a baby? he asks. What is the relationship between nature and nurture, between genetics and environment? How important are good genes? How powerful are socio-cultural factors in determining outcomes? How much does poverty or a hostile environment matter ? How do we discriminate between bodily and mental functioning? What kind of evidence can we use to investigate any or one of these issues when so much of what babies do is ambiguous, when their expressions of intent depend on the interpretation of others, and when the outcomes of early interventions may not be known for many years, if at all? He argues that unlike medical knowledge about bodily development which appears to be based on solid, observable fact (but even so with considerable room for interpretation), behaviour is much more contentious and variable. Each theory of infant development, from Darwin onwards, he claims, tells us more about the theorist and his time and context than it does about babies. All theories claim to be based on "scientific" evidence but ideas and methodologies in science change ever more rapidly.

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[9]Adams, C.T. and Winston, K.T. (1980) *Mothers at Work: Public Policies in the United States, Sweden and China*. New York. Longman.

[10]Gu, L (1996). *Chinese Day care in Cultural Change*. Paper given at the European Educational Research Association Conference, Seville.

[11]Bradley, B. (1989) *Visions of Infancy*. Cambridge. Polity Press.

Mothibi's story

Part of this account has been written in the company of my three month old grandson Mothibi. I write about his story here because it illustrates vividly many of the complexities involved in caring for young children.

Mothibi is at an age when he watches faces intently, providing they are within a range of about two metres. He also looks towards the sounds of voices. If I look at his eyes it seems as though he is perpetually quizzical, always trying to decipher and predict the meaning and intent of those faces which loom into his view. He also puzzles about the objects which are close to him. He is not yet sure that his hands belong to him, and if you give him a rattle or soft toy to grasp, he holds it but cannot reliably control the movement of his hand or predict that the object in it, in turn, is moved by his hand, so he flips his face with his toys, or sucks and chews them if they end up touching his mouth. He has little notion of the constancy of objects or people. There is no point yet in trying to play peep-bo with him — he does not understand that it is the same object or face appearing and reappearing. Instead he seems to be seeing a kaleidoscope of movement which has no particular sequence. Sometimes, however he seems overwhelmed by some internal discontent, hunger, indigestion, or tiredness, and then he stops looking at faces or objects and cries, often loudly and, to our ears, indignantly. At other times, usually after he has just been fed, he is very relaxed, and seems to squirm with pleasure when he sees a face or hears a voice near him. Then he smiles broadly, gurgles, and his whole body moves and his arms and legs flail.

These at least are my interpretations of his behaviour and when I look after him, I try to work out what part of this cycle of behaviour he is at, and how I can best respond to it, by feeding him, by cuddling him, by putting him down to sleep, by giving him objects to play with, or by talking to him or soothing him with a dummy. It is guesswork. At one level, I consider the routine is almost entirely dictated by him, but I also have other things to do and do not want to devote my time, attention and bodily contact exclusively to him. I try to fit in with what he seems to need and want and sometimes I get it right, if the criterion is that he stops crying, eats, sleeps, gurgles or plays; but I also want to carve out time and space for myself even whilst caring for him. Absorbing as he is, I also want to think about and talk with others on a more reciprocal level.

But Mothibi, as you might gather from his name, which is Ndebele and means "one who cares for others" is a child with a mixed heritage. His father was brought up in an illiterate household in a township in South Africa, and is now a diplomat — a transition which may appear dramatic, but is not so unusual in the new South Africa where

opportunities were systematically denied to so many blacks and where the ANC Government is making heroic efforts to undo the past. Mothibi's mother is a white, well-educated Englishwoman, whose professional career was predictable from the beginning. Mothibi is being brought up in Mexico, where his father has been posted, and spends part of his time with a Spanish speaking Mexican Indian maid. Mothibi is one of many - if not most — of the world's children who inhabit what Renato Rosaldo[12] calls "cultural borderlands;" a child who will daily come across overlapping, contradictory and often conflictual cultural expectations — although perhaps his case is an extreme one. He is being brought up at an intersection of ideas and beliefs about childhood, at a crossover point of language, culture, class and gender.

The ideas and assumptions of his parents and carers might be taken for granted, and appear normal, or even universal, if he had been brought up in a conventional middle-class white Western household. Normal or not, his background profoundly influences how he is cared for, by whom and in what circumstances. In other words, bringing up young children is not merely a matter of scientific application or maternal instinct, or grandmotherly experience or a combination of these things. It is also highly cultural and contextual, although mostly this cultural context is invisible and it is easy to assume white middle class norms to be universal, the same good practice holding for all children.

Over the months we have had discussions about Mothibi's upbringing. It is obvious that he is the recipient of different memories, aspirations and practices. Apartheid South Africa where his father grew up was harsh. There was grinding poverty and subservience to whites; an atmosphere of constant fear, anxiety and humiliation. State violence was endemic, and bred violence in return. Subversiveness and evasion were necessary tactics for blacks. The life of black children was in many ways very hard by Western standards. Food was what you were given. Space indoors was at a premium and there was no baby furniture — cardboard boxes wedged with cloth served as baby chairs. There was no choice or variety of toys. Children did what they were told and were expected to help. Disobedience or cheekiness to parents was regarded as immature and selfish behaviour, whinging was not tolerated, physical chastisement frequent. Gender differences were marked. Women did the domestic work and child care. Men were often away and were expected to be tough. Special rituals existed for boys to enable them to develop physical and mental endurance and stamina and to overcome severe physical privation without complaint.

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[12]Rosaldo, R. (1993). *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*. London. Routledge.

On the other hand, daily life was essentially communal. Children played together in the street, many adults, relatives, friends and neighbours dropped in on one another, relatives came to stay and then left again, so households rarely stayed the same for long. There was frequent singing and dancing. This was also a polyglot background, speakers slipping in and out of a number of African languages as well as Afrikaans and English. The jargon often incorporates them all within the confines of a single sentence! Multilingualism is a necessity for the poor and oppressed in many countries. This environment was a non-literate one and oral culture necessarily produces a different way of listening and learning. Books were not available and advice on childrearing was by word of mouth from relatives and older women. Western medicine was only available at a formidable price, and women mostly relied on folk remedies if their children were sick.

White middle class England was literally and figuratively another land. It was relatively egalitarian; the rule of law applied to everyone and in principle everyone had access to it. No one had guns. As a mother I tried to be "child-centred" to tread a delicate line between indulgence and liberality, to allow my children as much freedom and self-determination as possible, and never to smack — although I may have very occasionally lapsed! My daughters, like most children could choose from a range of foods, clothes and toys — indeed children in North America and the UK are increasingly targeted by toy and food and furniture manufacturers who profit by the many choices and preferences children are encouraged to make. Some fussiness about food was regarded as normal. It was an entirely monolingual environment yet I read child care books which encouraged me to "bathe" my children in language, to talk to them and read books to them constantly, to make the links between speech and print. Children who did not speak English were regarded as a "problem", as having some kind of special need of remedial attention.

As a mother newly immersed in feminist literature, I tried to follow a gender-blind approach, to provide unisex clothes and toys, and to insist boys and girls could and should behave similarly and learn the same things in the same way. There was no shortage of space, we had enough bedrooms and a big garden, although I worried constantly and protectively about risk, safety, danger and physical hurt. We did not routinely sing or dance, nor did we walk. Exercise was a special activity, which usually took place at a special time or in a special place — ball games or swimming or planned walks — not an everyday normal occurrence. I used the free medical services, the baby clinics, the doctor, the dentist, and tried to inform myself, through a series of manuals, about what experts advised — I valued such scientific information over and above

anything my relatives might suggest. Indeed I saw very little of relatives except during formal pre-arranged visits, and our household varied little in its daily arrangements.

Meshing these two remembered childhoods has been a hard task for Mothibi's parents — and indeed for his grandparents! The smallest and most trivial incidents evoke contradictory feelings — when he is older should Mothibi be expected to eat chicken feet and chicken heads — a remembered delicacy from his father's own childhood, but certainly not part of a Western diet. In Mexico where they now live there is yet another set of norms and expectations about language, class, ethnicity and gender. Mexico for example is a very unequal society, where there is a large servant class of mainly Mexican Indian origin. Mothibi will spend part of his time being looked after by servants who are very deferential, and will treat him beautifully and attentively, but as a little prince. They will also speak to him in Spanish. In Mexico there is a saying that bilingualism is an advantage: "To have two languages is like having two souls".

So as a starting point for discussion about practice with young children, it is important to emphasize the diversity and complexities of children's lives — and the lives of those who bring them up. Ideas and beliefs about language, literacy, and oracy; about the body and its care and nutrition; about instruction, learning, discipline; about individuality and community; about men and women and the roles ascribed to them; about poverty, wealth, and the exercise of choice and expectation of possessions; about enjoyment and conviviality; about the nature of relationships, deference, subservience, hierarchy and ethnicity; about stability and change; about law, ethics and morality; all these infuse practice, even something as apparently innocent as giving a baby a piece of paper or a rattle to play with. They provide a framework, sometimes a very contradictory or subtle one, for bringing up children, and we diminish our understanding by ignoring it. Martin Woodhead[13] has attempted to describe this diversity, and the need to judge practice accordingly, with the phrase "contextually appropriate practice"; although this is a somewhat static concept. As Sharon Stephens[14], Renato Rosaldo and others have stressed, what characterizes so many children's -and adults — lives is change and complexity, and frequently disadvantage; an increasing awareness of contradictory values, expectations and practices, lives lived in overlapping and unequal communities and cultures.

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[13]Woodhead, M. (1996). *Over the Rainbow*. Bernard Van Leer Foundation

[14]Stephens, S (1995). *Children and the Politics of Culture*. New Jersey. Princeton University Press.

Current practices in child care

This paper reviews recent theory, training and practice in the care of children outside their homes. It offers a brief critique of current Anglo-American texts, and then explores ideas which start from different premises and which have led to alternative practices. It is not an exhaustive review but is intended to give an indication of the range of ideas which inform out of home care for infants in many countries. Also, ideas and practices continually change, in response to political imperatives and new knowledge. Some of the examples described here may have subsequently been developed or moved onto new ground. But there are sufficient of them to be able to make some suggestions about what constitutes good care in an international context.

The first section of this paper deals with the extent to which knowledge of infancy is contentious. It argues that much of our knowledge is derived from a particular frame of reference, that is the normative context established as a result of Anglo-North American child development studies. The section considers these predominant assumptions, and the contexts in which they have arisen, and their implications for practice in looking after and caring for young children.

The second section will explore different traditions of theory and practice, particularly those which have developed in Europe, including Eastern Europe, where somewhat different values and assumptions have been ascribed to children and childhood. Five parameters of practice are described: ideas about the nature of relationships between adults and very young children; ideas about children as learners; ideas about health and well-being; ideas about training and employment for those who work with young children; and ideas about ecology and the environment.

The third section will suggest some ways forward for integrating this information.

The references are cited as footnotes. These references refer mainly to practice guides and policy statements rather than academic studies, although the latter are also included.

DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE

The market context

Assumptions about motherhood and the social and economic wellbeing of society, as well as about childhood, have shaped — and continue to shape — policy and practice in infant care. In recent years in an Anglo-American context, it was viewed as unacceptable or at least unwise for mothers of young children to work. The development of affectional and emotional stability was seen as contingent on a close warm relationship with a mother or mother figure, and it was predicted that without such a relationship at this critical early period, children ran a serious risk of becoming emotionally damaged.[1] A series of articles and books have subsequently critiqued this assumption, from a number of angles. The latest American child care research, a massive American day care study of 11,000 children, now "conclusively" finds that "good" day care does not negatively affect attachment to a mother figure or cognitive development — although the researchers also somewhat naively find that "poor" day care does negatively affect poor children and that poor parents cannot easily afford good day care.[2]

These latest findings conveniently mirror societal change. More women now choose to maintain their careers after childbirth; and there is increased governmental concern both in the USA and in the UK about social assistance payments to single mothers on low incomes. Various schemes in these countries have recently been introduced to insist/persuade such mothers to seek day care and return to work in order to alleviate social assistance bills.[3]

Neuro-physiological, rather than emotional, critical periods are now cited as evidence in favour of early intervention. It is argued that the brain development which takes place in the first three years of life is potentially so great that these years constitute an invaluable "window of opportunity" for developing the human mind and thinking power. Stimulating babies and presenting them with continuous new

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[1]Bowlby, J. (1953). *Child Care and the Growth of Love.* London. Penguin Books.

[2]NICHD. (1998). *The National Institute of Child Health and Development Study of Early Child Care.* Washington. NICHD. Publication No. 98-4318.

[3]For example in the UK the lone parent's allowance which was a supplement to the weekly child benefit payments available to all mothers has now been withdrawn.

experiences and inputs — either persuading or teaching mothers or carers to do it at home, or doing it in well-set-up child care centres — is predicted to enhance later performance, and in doing so, it offers individuals a means of surviving and combating poor circumstances.[4]

A powerful belief in market economics underpins these more recent child care strategies. Increasing incentives for poor mothers to work — and the introduction of penalties for those who stay at home — reduces state expenditure, increases tax revenues, and creates a more flexible workforce. Investing in programmes of early intervention for children is seen as a strategy which brings high rates of return because relatively inexpensive capital input (compared to other forms of infrastructure) can potentially counteract the negative features of having an underclass — ie unemployment, crime and disorder.[5] This economic metaphor of rates of return is also increasingly used in the third or majority world to justify loans to governments to develop some kind of early childhood care and education programmes. The World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank both have such programmes,[6 7] although the intervention they envisage is entrepreneurial or non-governmental rather than state-run or funded.

The metaphor of rates of return is an example of the way in which economists — who arguably are now the most powerful political theorists — are examining child care as an economic system. These economic texts explore such aspects as the relationship between pricing and demand, the economic rationale for government subsidies, the behaviour of consumers, and so on.[8] Children in turn are viewed as a commodity which can be handled in a variety of ways to increase productivity. The Economist magazine recently carried a leader in which it argued that children in public places were a nuisance to everyone except their parents and constituted a "negative externality."

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[4]Curiously, there are few if any studies cited in academic journals which attempt to establish a link over and above a rhetorical one with any kind of physiological process. The only exception are those instances where there is unequivocal neurological or genetic damage. Haith comments that *"we don't even have the luxury of knowing with certainty what the primordial structures are for the constructs and competencies we entertain."* Haith, M (1998). *Who Put the Cog in Infant Cognition?* Infant Behaviour and Development. V.21(2). pp 167-179.

[5]Weikart, D. (1996). *High Quality Preschool Programs Found to Improve Adult Status.* Childhood. V.3.(1). pp. 117-120

[6]Young, M. (1996). *Early Child Development: Investing in the Future.* Washington. World Bank.

[7]For example the Inter-American Development Bank has recently organized a major conference entitled *Breaking the Poverty Cycle: Investing in Early Childhood.*

[8]Blau, D. (1991). *The Economics of Child Care.* New York. Russell Sage Foundation.

Governments typically respond to... market failures in two ways. One is higher taxes, to make polluters pay the full cost of their anti-social behaviour. The other is regulation, such as emission standards or bans on smoking in public places. Both approaches might work for children. For children, just like cigarettes or mobile phones, clearly impose a negative externality on people who are near them.[9]

Children are also viewed as a valuable consumer market. Major advertising agencies have set up children's divisions to promote the consumption of certain types of food, clothes and toys. Enabling ever younger children to exercise choice over the products they use and consume, and stimulating their desire for more choices, brings substantial financial returns to manufacturers. [10] The day care market, both in the USA and in the UK, is subject to intense commercial pressure and manufacturers in both countries hold massive trade fairs and conferences to attract custom.

In a market economy, consumer choice and product competition act as a basic regulatory force. In terms of day care, there is a trade off between price and quality. Education of consumers (mothers and fathers) is seen as an important complement to any governmental regulatory strategy. Generally parents are seen as ill-educated in the matter of day care, and research suggests they generally rate day care as being of better quality than do experts rating the same facilities.[11] Nor are parents necessarily familiar with the scope of the local day care market or what it has to offer. So in the absence of tighter state control of standards, or local and readily available state provision, child care information systems, including information on developmentally appropriate practice, are seen by professionals as necessary to advise parents on how to make their choices in a diverse marketplace, so they can avoid choosing the worst day care.[12] On the other hand unskilled women, and/or women who have been out of the workforce whilst caring for young children are particularly vulnerable in a flexible labour market.

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[9]The Economist: *Mum's the Word*. December 5th 1998. p.20.

[10]George Monbiot. *The Guardian Newspaper*. Dec 4th 1998.

[11]Cryer, D. and Burchinall, M. (1997). Parents as Child Care Consumers. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*. V.12. pp. 35 -38

[12]The UK Government has recently launched a programme of research and development into child care information systems. There are several long standing programmes in the USA, the most notable of which is based in California.

Their contractual status is likely to be poor and their working hours irregular or asocial.[13] Such working conditions makes day care harder to find and to pay for, for those who are most likely to be in urgent need of it; parents are necessarily inconsistent in seeking and maintaining care arrangements for their young children if they are also under pressure to maximize their work opportunities.

As Mallory and New point out, developmentally appropriate practice relies implicitly on *"individualistic and meritocratic..interpretations of optimal development"*[14]. The progress of an individual child is seen to outweigh any consideration for the well being or progress of the group or kinship group or community of which the child is a part. The critique of child development as individualistic is a long running one, and was most eloquently expressed by William Kessen when he talked of the child as a "cultural invention"[15]. The cross-cultural/anthropological literature is not discussed here, but it is worth pointing out that in many majority (third world) countries, the categories conventionally used in developmentally appropriate practice are misapplied. *Every society has its own developmental stories that are rooted in social organizational beliefs and values...the general patterns of white middle class caregiving that have been described in the psychological literature are characteristic neither of all societies nor of all social groups.*[16] The "empirical" evidence of child development studies is contradictory, and there are now too many competing theories to be able to draw confidently or unambiguously on particular approaches to practice.

The argument presented here is that particular "developmental stories" have their roots in socio-economic and value bases. A market economy approach dominates North America and is the context for the current emphasis on *developmentally appropriate practice*.

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[13] A comprehensive survey of women in the workforce in the UK suggested that a majority of women who work evening and night shifts have young children. Martin, J. and Roberts, C. (1984) *Employment: A Lifetime Perspective*. London. OPCS Women and Employment Survey. HMSO

[14] (eds) Mallory, B. and New, R. (1994). *Diversity and Developmentally Appropriate Practices*. N.Y. Teacher's College Press.

[15] Kessen, W. (1979). *The American Child and Other Cultural Interventions. American Psychologist*. V.34 (10). pp 815-820

[16] Ochs, E. and Shieffelin, B. (1984). *Language Acquisition and Socialization* in (eds) R. Shweder and R. Levine: *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self and Emotion*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press

As Moss points out:[17]

(lack of funding is) one reason why issues of standards, credentialing and regulation seem to figure so high on the American agenda, as means of cajoling a market system to improve its performance; but hardly appear on the agenda of countries like Denmark and Sweden, where public funding enables and requires uniform staffing standards without jeopardising affordability.

Developmentally appropriate practice

In this context, what does good practice consist of ? There is a considerable debate in the literature, most notably in the *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, the journal associated with the North American organization National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Nevertheless there is a broad consensus over what is appropriate. *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs‡*[18] aims to give general guidelines to practitioners on what constitutes good practice in infant (and older) care, and cites the psychological evidence in support of these practices. Although it claims that its precepts reflect empirical findings from the discipline of child development, as Nikolas Rose has commented, such practical measurements are rarely — if ever — straightforward applications of existing knowledge in child development.[19] Instead, as Hebbeler has argued, they are drawn up in response to problems in existing services and practices.[20]

The assumption which underwrites the guide to developmentally appropriate practice is that the marketplace may be full of poor practice, given the financial imperative to cut costs and make profits. Both owners of child care centres and other forms of out-of-home provision, and the parents who use it, need to be referred to

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[17]Moss, P (1999). *Training for Work in Early Childhood Services.* Paris. OECD forthcoming. Also reprinted in H. Penn (ed) *Early Childhood Services: Theory, Policy and Practice.* Milton Keynes. Open University Press, forthcoming.

[18](eds) Bredekamp, S. and Copple, C. (1997). *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs.* Washington, National Association for the Education of Young Children. This is an update of the 1987 edition.

[19]Rose, ibid.

[20]Hebbeler, K. (1997). *A System in a System: Sociopolitical factors and Early Intervention.* In (eds) S.K. Thurman, J. R. Cornwell and S. R. Gottwald. Contexts of Early Intervention: Systems and Settings. Baltimore. Paul Brookes. pp. 19-38.

simply stated precepts of child development. In this situation, where reflective, well-educated practitioners are not the norm, and turnover of staff and children in child care is high, basic information which is said to draw on the findings of child development is a necessary tool to encourage good practice and to admonish bad practice.

The guide to developmentally appropriate practice‡ also draws implicitly on American cultural norms, for instance continuously stressing individuality, independence, self-assertiveness, personal choice and the availability of possessions.

> *When provided with a wealth of experiences to choose from during the day, infants seek desired activities or objects and learn to avoid painful or fearful situations (19) When their needs have been met appropriate as infants, toddlers are experienced in making choices and implementing their own ideas (21)... Children also must experience many attempts to negotiate ownership (21)... Forcing children to share, contrary to folk wisdom, is not an effective way to help children to learn to share. An ample number of toys must be provided (21)... Toddlers and 2 year olds need opportunities to be responsible, to make significant choices (25)...As children begin to crawl and then to walk, they are better able to explore and indicate their preferences. Their favourite toys, foods and activities can be sources of pride and interest for parents and staff alike...(29). Children who are secure and trusting will increasingly ready to take initiative, be creative, participate in a group and assert themselves as individuals (29).*

It echoes the earlier concerns about mother-infant bonding. Paradoxically, although children are less than full members of society,[21] and, as The Economist suggests, adults generally prefer to ignore other people's children, as if in compensation, children in day care must be individually cherished. The guide‡ continually stresses the importance of adult child affectional bonds, and downplays child-child bonds.

> *The importance of the presence of an intelligent, benevolent and affectionate adult in facilitating infant's development cannot be overemphasized . Developmental progress occurs through a process of interaction between children and their environment, especially the adults who care for them. (22) Patient warm adults are probably the most important factor in the developmentally appropriate program for infants and toddlers (25).*

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[21] America and Somalia are the only two countries in the world to have refused to become signatories to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The infant/toddler environment rating scale

The Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale [22] is the most widely used tool in North America for evaluating the quality of practice, and as a basis for a national accreditation programme for child care workers. Developmentally Appropriate Practice and the Infant/Toddler Rating Scale were developed independently of each other, and have different functions, but essentially cover the same ground.

As a measurement tool, it is worth considering the scope of the Infant/Toddler Rating Scale. Its authors argue that they have exhaustively tested for content validity, inter-rater reliability, and internal consistency, and that it constitutes a well-tried, flexible and predictive instrument. The scale aims to measure the extent to which the day care centre or childminder is able to:

* establish and maintain a safe, healthy learning environment
* support social and emotional development and provide positive guidance
* establish positive and productive relationships with families
* ensure a well-run, purposeful program responsive to need
* maintain a commitment to professionalism

The scale is not intended to be speculative or open ended or to encourage critical discussion, but instead offers definitive and measurable criteria on the basis of which external comparisons can be made. It contains 35 items, grouped into 7 categories. These are furnishings and display; personal care routines; listening and talking; learning activities; interaction; programme structure; and adult needs. Each of these items is rated on a scale 1-7.

The emphasis throughout is on material provision and on individual performance. For example the items about furnishing say nothing about aesthetics or concepts of space, but emphasize instead the need to provide plenty of toys and equipment such as child-sized furniture in good condition, to provide display space for individual children's work, and to ensure child safety. The interaction section stresses the need for adults to use positive rather than negative controls, to reinforce good behaviour and to help children avoid bad behaviour, but has little to say about group ethos or mutual

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[22]Harms, T., Cryer, D. And Clifford, R. (1990). *Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale*. N.Y. Teachers' College Press.

support. The section on adult needs gives credit for the provision of separate adult space and rest rooms, but makes no mention of wages or conditions of work. Whilst claiming to offer a comprehensive coverage, and in many respects representing a progressive approach, the scale nevertheless operates within a pragmatic formula in which measurable phenomenon take precedence, questions of value bases are not raised and bad practice is assumed to be common.

The rating scale is designed for ease of use. It can be used in a variety of ways; by researchers seeking to compare the performance of children in day care; by regulatory bodies wishing to impose minimum standards; by child care information centres aiming to provide kitemarks of quality for parents; by training bodies assessing the competency of students. It is intended as a flexible instrument for use in a highly variable and competitive child care market; but as such it is not discursive and does not allow for any divergence from its stated norms and expectations, which it assumes adequately reflect developmentally appropriate practice.

The wider context of the debate about developmentally appropriate practice has been stressed because the publications which have emerged offering guidance to the assessment of appropriate practice appear to be neutral instruments. The argument presented here is that they have arisen out of a very particular market context. This context is very different in many other countries. Different assumptions, values and practices inform other child care systems and as a result, the shape of practice, and the experimentation and documentation within it, takes different forms.

EUROPEAN PROVISION FOR UNDER THREES

Overview of provision: the European Union

The European Childcare Network has provided a comprehensive account of the systems of day care in the European Union.[1] In most, but not all, of the member states, there is comprehensive state provision for children three and over, and some state-provided services for children under three. However the state provision takes very different forms in each member state or group of states. In the Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Sweden, and Finland) there is a social welfare-based system, which combines good maternity and paternity leave arrangements (lessening the demand for day care for very young children) with a comprehensive and universal welfare system of state-funded child care for children 0-14 which in effect guarantees places to any child whose parents require it. In France and Belgium there are systems of state-funded health system-based crèches for children aged 0-2 years six months, and full time education system-based écoles-maternelles for children two years and six months until school starts at six. In Spain all provision is covered by the Spanish Education Reform Act, which specifies two infant cycles of 0-3 and 3-6, with an appropriate outline curriculum for each, and a specified minimum of tertiary teacher trained staff — although there are considerable regional variations in the levels of state-funded provision. Italy has a similar education based pattern to Spain, although without such a comprehensive legal framework, and without the same requirements for staff training. In Italy the regional differences are still more marked, with an exceptionally high level of state provision in the northern regions such as Emilia Romagna and Tuscany. Germany loosely follows the Scandinavian model, but there is considerable variation between East and West Germany. Austria is similar to Germany. These European Union systems are summarized in figure 1.

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[1]European Childcare Network (1996). *A Review of Services for Young Children in the European Union 1990-1995*. Brussels. European Commission Directorate General V.

Figure 1

	Maternity + parental leave	Age of starting school	Type of system	State-funded provision 0-3	state funded provision 3-6
Belgium	27 weeks	6	health 0-2 + education 2-5	30% f/t	95% f/t
Denmark	30 weeks	7	welfare 0-6	48% West	82% f/t (6 year olds usually in pre-primary school
Germany	36	6	welfare 0-5	2% West 50% East	78% mixed ft/pt West; 100% ft East
Greece	9	6	parallel welfare and education	3%	70%
Spain	36	6	education	2%	84%
France	36	6	health 0-2 + education 2-5	23%f/t	99% f/t
Ireland	3	6	parallel welfare and education	2%	55%
Italy	9	6	education	6%f/t	91% f/t
Netherlands	15	5	parallel welfare and education	8%	71%
Austria	24	6	welfare	3%	75% mixed f/t
Portugal	27	6	parallel welfare and education	12%	48%
Finland	36	7	welfare	21% f/t	72% (plus 6 year olds in pre-primary)
Sweden	36	7	welfare (changing to education in 2000)	33% f/t	72% (plus 6 year olds in pre-primary)
UK	7	5	parallel welfare and education	2%	60% mainly p/t (most 4 year olds in primary school)

Notes:

1. These figures are approximate figures, since statistics are not collected in a similar form across member states, and refer mostly to 1993/94. The source for the figures is the European Childcare Network-see end note 1 below.

2. In some countries such as UK, Netherlands and Ireland most provision is part-time 2-3 hours per day, rather than full day care and has an educative or respite emphasis.

3. The percentages refer to state-funded provision. Some member states fund voluntary or non-profit organizations, including licensed daycarers rather than deliver services directly. In other countries all provision is state-funded and state-provided.

4. The age at which school starts is a critical factor, since it has a downward influence on early childhood services, which must orientated themselves towards school requirements. Children start school earliest in the UK where most four year olds are in primary schools, which place heavy emphasis on early acquisition of formal skills. As a result, nurseries are required to ensure all children achieve certain "outcomes" or performance levels before they start school, and must submit to inspection showing that these goals can be met. By contrast, Scandinavian children do not start formal school until they are seven, and there is considerably more local freedom to determine the daily regime at nursery or kindergarten level.

5. There are considerable regional differences within countries; the most marked variations being in Italy where figures for some Northern regions are 40% of under threes and 98% of children three to five in full-time state funded — state provided services. Figures in Spain also vary considerably, with high percentages of children under and over three in the communes of Barcelona and Madrid in full-time state-funded, state-provided services.

6. A number of countries are in the throes of change, most notably Germany, where conditions in East and West Germany are being harmonized, and Sweden, where a transfer to the education system is taking place. In the UK child care subsides paid to low income parents are intended to stimulate an expansion of services in the private sector, and a new initiative is being launched for children and families under three but as part of a social exclusion strategy where the emphasis is on education and support of parents in poor areas, rather than a straightforward increase in daycare for working parents.

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The European Childcare Network has also produced a discussion document and guidelines on quality in early childhood services, and an accompanying video, which have been a useful benchmark for professionals and policy makers in developing services,[2] but their insistence on the relationship between quality and public funding has meant that they have been least welcomed in those countries such as the UK where there is a heavy reliance on the private market.

In most European countries the market system is of minor importance in comparison with the state sector for children over three but of more relevance to children under three. Where comprehensive state-funded systems exist, the issue of choice does not really arise since most parents, even wealthy parents, would both expect and want to use local provision.[3] In Belgium and France all provision is centrally-controlled and regulated and could be described as monolithic, although in France there is an alternative state-supported "creche parentales" movement, and new attempts to develop provision described below. In other countries such as Italy, Denmark, Spain or Germany, there is a considerable decentralization, and crèches and kindergartens are relatively autonomous and self-directing.[4] The UK, Ireland and the Netherlands rely most on non-state provision, either private or provided by voluntary organizations.

Overview of provision: Eastern Europe

Most ex-communist countries in Eastern Europe, the ex-Russian republics, China, Mongolia, Vietnam and Cuba all had comprehensive state-provided kindergartens, which were developed with the explicit intention of providing comprehensive child care for working parents, and educating young children to become "good citizens of our country." As well as an educational curriculum, the kindergartens provided regular

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[2]Balaguer, I., Mestres, J. and Penn, H. (1992). *Quality in Services for Young Children*. Brussels. European Childcare Network. European Commission Directorate General V. European Childcare Network (1996). *Quality Targets in Services for Young Children*. Brussels. European Commission Directorate General V. (ed) Jensen, C. (1996). *Can You See a Colour*. Video produced on behalf of the European Childcare Network. Aarhus. Denmark.

[3]At the annual NAEYC conference held in Toronto in 1998, Leila Gandini made a presentation of the system of day care in Reggio Emilia in Northern Italy, whose results have attracted world-wide attention. She stressed that a state system of local, collective provision used by everyone made the accomplishments of the kindergartens possible. The first questioner from the audience asked "do you mean to say parents have no choice? So a parent who wanted to pay more for better provision wouldn't be allowed to do so?".

[4]Penn, H. (1997). *Comparing Nurseries: Children and Staff in Spain, Italy and the UK*. London. Paul Chapman.

health checks often with doctors or nurses attached to the kindergartens.[5] Although most of these systems have partially retrenched since the fall of communism, nevertheless the traditions of collective care remain strong and well-articulated[6]. In Bulgaria for example, 70% of children still attend full-time kindergarten, and in the capital city, Sofia, the figure is 90%. Moreover, given the level of poverty in Bulgaria, where the average monthly wage is approximately US $35, nevertheless most of these kindergartens are cited in spacious well-equipped buildings, many with their own heated swimming pools![7] This superior level of state resources is almost unimaginable in North America or the UK but was once regarded as a challenge. Uri Bronfenbrenner unfavourably compared American systems with those of Russia[8] and William Kessen and his colleagues made similar positive claims for child care in China.[9] Such comparisons are now highly unfashionable given the collapse of communism, yet it should be noted that even in the post-communist world, these unflattering comparisons about levels of provision for working parents still hold. Western donors, such as the Soros Foundation, now working in Eastern Europe and other ex-communist countries dismiss these comparisons on the grounds that the kindergartens for young children are so rigid and didactic that it is a priority to diversify provision and to introduce child-centred methods to those kindergartens that remain, and to reiterate the importance of parental, as opposed to state, responsibility for young children.[10] The ex-communist systems are summarized in figure 2.

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[5]Penn, H (1998). *Children in the Majority World: is Outer Mongolia really so far away?* in (eds) S. Hood, B.Mayall and S. Oliver. Critical Issues in Social Research. Open University Press.

[6]Retrenchment has most affected services for children under three, for whom separate provision was often made in crèches. Where children under three now attend, they are more likely to be in a class or group attached to a kindergarten.

[7]Penn, H. (1998). *Situational Analysis of Integrated Education in Bulgaria.* Report prepared for Save the Children-UK.

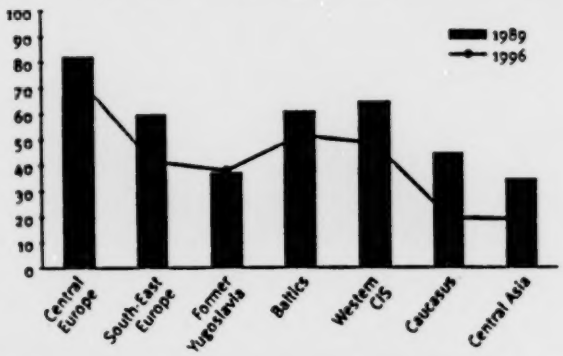
[8]Bronfenbrenner, U. (1970). *Two Worlds of Childhood.* NY. Russell Sage Foundation.

[9](ed) Kessen, W.(1975). *Child Care in China: Report of the 13 person American delegation to China.* Mass. Yale University Press.

[10]The Soros Foundation runs a program entitled "Step by Step" dedicated to child-centred methods which introduce children to concepts of choice and self-determination. This program operates throughout Eastern Europe and further afield in other ex-communist countries.

Although the system in each country varies considerably, and daily practice takes its cue from the nature of the wider system in which it is located — health-based, education-based, welfare-based, market-based, communist — there has been considerable exchange of ideas and overlapping of practice in neighbouring countries or in countries with similar traditions. Those continental countries with well established traditions of child care for infants have built up a considerable repertoire of practice and practice literature, whereas in the UK for example relatively little has been written about infant care outside the home. Subsequent sub-sections are each devoted to one of five broad, interconnected and overlapping themes and explores how they have each been translated into practice in various European countries. These themes are: the nature of relationships; health, safety and physical well-being; education and styles of instruction; parents and carers; environment and ecology.

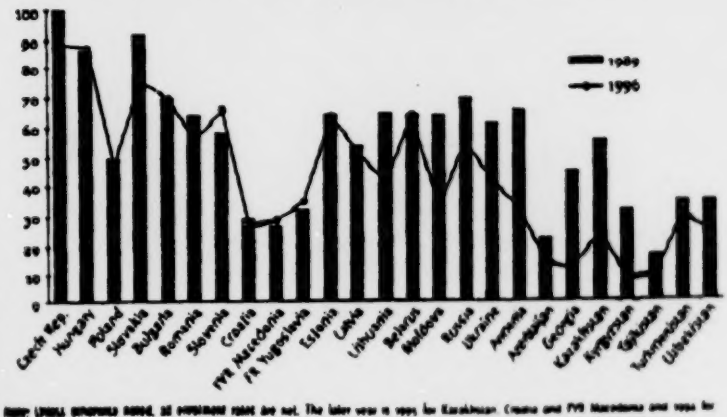
Figure 2



Kindergarten enrolment rates by area, 1989-96 (percent)

Source: Statistical Annex, Table 7.1.

Note: The data are based on unweighted averages and represent net enrolment rates among 3 5/6 year olds, except in Central Asia and Moldova, where rates are for the 1-6 age group. The earlier and later years for former Yugoslavia are 1990 and 1995, and the regional average excludes data for Bosnia Herzegovina. The later year is 1995 for Kazakhstan and 1994 for Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. The definition of enrolment cohort varies by country; see additional notes in the Statistical Annex.



Kindergarten enrolment rates by country, 1989-96 (percent)

Source: Statistical Annex, Table 7.1.

Note: Latest available reported rates. All enrolment rates are net. The later year is 1995 for Kazakhstan, Croatia and FYR Macedonia and 1994 for Lithuania, Turkmenistan and Georgia. The definition of enrolment cohort varies by country; see additional notes in the Statistical Annex.

The Nature Of Relationships

The influence of attachment theory in the UK

Attachment theory posits that a warm continuous relationship with a mother or mother figure in infancy is essential to mental health. This theory was, and still is, widely held, but was interpreted most conservatively in the UK, partly because the originator of the theory, John Bowlby lived and worked in the UK and the Tavistock group of psychoanalysts of which he was a part was influential in shaping public opinion.[1] As a result mothers were strongly discouraged from working, and it was regarded as bad practice to place young children in day care. For many years local authorities in the UK actively discouraged the placement of babies in any nursery, either in social services' nurseries, or in the very few private nurseries which then existed. Instead "mother and toddler" groups and other informal opportunities for mothers to meet and spend time with each other, without losing sight of their children, were developed. Full time day care for older children was also strongly discouraged, although part-time nursery classes or playgroups, often no more than 12-15 hours a week, were regarded as acceptable.

If child care was required, childminders, or family day carers were used in the hope they would act as mother substitutes, although there was also research literature which suggested childminding was highly problematic and did not emulate mothering.[2] As equal opportunities statutes gained more ground, it became more acceptable for mothers of young children to work, and the private nursery market gradually flourished. In 1989 the Children Act was passed, which acknowledged the need for child care, but in the tradition of attachment theory, insisted on rigid guidelines concerning ratios of adults to children of 1:3 for children two and under; and 1:8 for children over three at all times. The level of staffing required to meet these ratios is very high, and this has made nursery provision in the UK very expensive; costs in the private sector can only be met by paying low wages and/or charging high fees. The private nursery market has nevertheless expanded from its very low base to outstrip the public sector by tenfold in the last 10 years; whereas the public sector has declined considerably.[3]

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[1]Holmes, J. (1993). *John Bowlby and Attachment Theory*. London. Routledge.

[2]Mayall, B. and Petrie, P. (1977). *Mother, Minder and Child*. London. Institute of Education, University of London.

[3]Government Statistical Office (1998). *Children's Day Care Facilities*. London. HMSO. There are 172,000 places provided in private nurseries as opposed to 20,000 in public provision, and 365,000 places with childminders or family day carers.

It is in this context that advice on practice is given; within an implicit rather than explicit tradition of attachment theory, and an understanding that practitioners must work within a tight regulatory framework. There are now several guides and manuals, but one of the most comprehensive and discursive attempts to define good practice for young children is offered by Elinor Goldschmied and Sonia Jackson, whose book, *People Under Three* has been influential.[4] Apart from attachment theory, they refer infrequently to child development literature — unlike the North American texts which claim to be entirely based on empirical findings carried out by developmental psychologists. Essentially the book is atheoretical: the authors present a study of daily practice in the UK, and make pragmatic recommendations to improve it. They argue that they can best understand and sympathize with a young child by drawing on their own experience as adults: *Whenever possible we draw analogies between things that happen to children and those that we commonly experience as adults. As memories before the age of three are mostly lost, this is one of the few ways available to us of attempting to understand the sensations and feelings of a small child* (3).

As adults, they acknowledge the felt truth of attachment theory: *We give great importance and value to attachments between individual children and adults and acknowledge the acute pain caused by their insensitive disruption, or alternatively, by the absence of such attachments (10)...throughout our lives we seek individual relationships and like to feel ourselves of particular importance to one person. This is especially so in stressful situations." (12) a pseudo(ethic of) self-reliance prevents children from seeking appropriate support from adults and inhibits their learning process* (39).

The crèche or nursery should in Goldschmied and Jackson's view replicate as much as possible an idealized domestic and personal setting, although they acknowledge that it is impractical to regard the nursery as a home. They recommend that children be age-grouped: *when children are grouped by age it is easier to match the arrangement of the group room to their developmental needs than a multi-age system* (33). Within this age grouping, they recommend a "key worker" system, that is one person who holds responsibility for making relationships with a particular child, whenever possible greeting her on arrival, settling her in, subtly arranging, guiding and responding to her activities, and attending to her physical needs, *We know from any hospital experience we may have had that a series of strange hands and different voices imposes great stress on us, especially when we are in a state of dependency* (40). If the key worker is not available, then she, or the manager, should arrange the substitute care to minimize disruption.

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[4]Goldschmied, E. and Jackson, S. (1996) *People Under Three*. London. Routledge.

In fact, the organization of day nurseries in the UK makes a key worker system very difficult to operate. Many children attend nursery on an irregular part time basis, partly because costs are so prohibitive that a minimum of care is bought by the parent; whilst the nursery seeks to maximize its intake by accepting as many children as possible, and by remaining open throughout the year to facilitate parental "choice" and to accommodate to a flexible labour market. The requirement that the 1-3 ratio must be covered at all times, means that staff flexibility is essential and staff are frequently drafted in to cover if the ratios are short because of fluctuating numbers of children, staff holidays, absences, or any other contingency. In a series of studies of day nurseries in the UK[5] I found that where a key worker system was in principle in place, in practice, because of everyday contingencies, it could rarely operate as intended; in effect it was a useful fiction, a convenient lip-service to attachment theory.

Group attachments and group continuity[6]

Other continental systems hold different views about how relationships might be supported. Whilst acknowledging the importance of consistent warm relationships between an adult and a particular child, such systems place an equal emphasis on the well-being and coherence of the group environment. The group, and group dynamics, are the subject of professional scrutiny, as well as the individual children within it. Typically in an Italian or Spanish nursery the children will be organized in small consistent groups, always with the same caretakers. Children under one will be organized in a group of six; children 1-2 in a group of eight; and children 2-3 in a group of ten or twelve. The same two members of staff will attend to the group, one on a morning shift, one on an afternoon shift, overlapping in the period 11am to 2pm, with additional help from a "dada" or domestic assistant. This arrangement is predicated on the regular daily attendance of the children, for whom there is less ambivalence about being in child care — the organization of the nurseries reflects a positive attitude towards child care rather than a fear that child care is a lesser evil for children.[6] The regular attendance of the children is made possible by fees subsidized to around 12% of

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[5]Penn, H.(1994). *Private Day Nurseries in the UK*. London. Report for Panorama, BBC.
Penn, H (1998). *Practising Excellence*. London. Social Science Research Unit. Institute of Education, London University. *Comparing Nurseries*. ibid.

[6]Marta Mata y Garriga (1999). *The Future of Infant Education* in (ed) H.Penn. *Theory Policy and Practice in Early Childhood Services*. Milton Keynes. Open University Press (forthcoming). Marta Mata y Garriga was a senior Spanish politican responsible for developing publicly-funded infant care in Spain.

household income, so that parents are not under pressure to economize on the time they can afford to buy, as might be the case in a market arrangement. The staff organization also maximizes continuity; it is the nature of the activity, as much as the number of children, which determine how many staff are required; and the nursery closes for holiday periods so all staff take their holidays together. Under these arrangements, young children who come to nursery are likely to have more consistent experiences than their UK counterparts despite a different rhetoric of attachment — they play with the same children, and are cared for by the same adults, and the well being and progress the group, and interactions between children and their carers are likely to be carefully enhanced and supported, even if the adult child ratios fluctuate. [7]

The importance of group solidarity and support has been stressed for a long time in many countries. For example the Family Aid Commission in Sweden in 1982 concluded, on the basis of a research study of 40 nurseries, that:

> *Today so much attention is put on the value of good relationships between children and grown-ups that we sometimes forget the importance of children's relationships with each other for their development. The Commission considers that work in the day nurseries must concentrate on developing the capacity for group fellowship among the children. A group in which they can be of support and joy for each other and where they are brought up to show solidarity and co-operation. In order to realise this children must be intact during a long period. Receiving new members and saying goodbye to old ones must in a conscious way be prepared and the work be directed towards strengthening the fellowship among the children still in the group.*[8]

Loczy and the theory of child autonomy

Some nurseries in these and other countries[9] draw on the work of the Loczy Institute in Hungary, as a theoretical framework for understanding relationships within nurseries.

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[7]This system is described in more detail in *Comparing Nurseries.*

[8]Ministry of Health and Foreign Affairs.(1982). *Good Day Care for Young Children: A Summary of the Report from the Family Aid Commission.* Stockholm.

[9]Cocever, E.(1990) *Bambini attivi e autonomi. A cosa serve l'adulto? L'esperienza di Loczy.* published in Florence by La Nueva Italia, argues that Emmi Pikler, the director of the Loczy Institute deserves a similar status to other great early childhood educators such as Maria Montessori and Celestin Freinet. Cocever has been involved in drawing up new government guidelines on crèche provision in Italy in which she

Emmi Pikler, the director of the Loczy Institute worked with orphans in Budapest and developed her theories first of all within the orphanage.[10] The Loczy method emphasizes the individuality and autonomy of infants. The infant is born with the potentiality of knowing, doing and loving, not in a way that merely responds to others, but in a manner which is active and constructive.

> *The infant is not born inferior to adults, and infancy is not a waiting room. It is a stage of life with experiences as diverse as those experienced by adults. Some of these experiences are shared with other children, and some are highly individual: educational relationships are a good preparation for future life in as much as they do not sacrifice the present to the future — it is important to acknowledge the present, to understand as a whole, not to splinter or fragment what the child experiences, to allow the child to construct and deal with the experiences she comes across. In an institutional setting it is all too easy to regulate children, to ignore or thwart their sense of autonomy; (Cocever p.11: author's translation)*

In the Loczy method, the job of the adult is to maintain the child's autonomy — always making sure that she first tries for herself to do or obtain what she wants, and, when with other children, negotiates her own relationships with other children rather than letting it be done by and through adults. The adult, rather than immediately responding to the child's gestures or requests, emotionally distances herself so that although she remains vigilant and acutely aware of the child's behaviour, she rarely intervenes directly, although she is alert to any indirect means of supporting what the child wants to do. In other words, Pikler argues, within a secure, stable and regular environment — the first requirement of the system — adults should not presume that children, even very young children, necessarily learn through adult mediation. Overstimulation, too much attention from adults, can be as bad as no attention.

> *The child expects to be the centre of attention all the time. He likes it. He, of course, doesn't do anything else any more; someone else is always busy doing something with him...such an infant will, in time, become increasingly whiney and cling to adults in an unhealthy way. He is only interested in adults, in having them around him, talking to*

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makes reference to Loczy. Similarly government advisers in Belgium and France also claim to have been influenced by the ideas of Loczy.

[10]The work of the Loczy Institute has now been partly discredited in Hungary itself because many of the children who attended were the children of imprisoned dissidents, and in retrospect it has been argued that the very particular circumstances of the children's referral should have been acknowledged; the children's background was not an accidental one and could not be discounted.

him, doing things with him, none of this however gives him a feeling of joy and satisfaction, of quiet and well-being — at least not one of lasting duration. It leaves him restless and in need of excitement. It is precisely this kind of excitement that a child gets accustomed to. He likes it, he cannot and will not do without it. We adults cannot do without lethal narcotics, once we have become addicted to them. In the same way...the infant who has gotten to like this kind of excitement does everything to be the centre of attention for the adults.[11]

These principles were derived in the context of work with the Loczy Institute, but Pikler also argues that non-intervention techniques and a gentle distancing by adults is equally important for mothers at home.

For babies and very young children, it is autonomous motor as well as cognitive development which is regarded as important. Children should be free to move within a very secure area, and at the Loczy Institute a very small group of babies would spend time together in a large communal playpen, where according to research by Pikler and her colleagues,[12] they learnt to see and touch one another with curiosity, as well as gradually exploring the objects within the playpen. Without the intervention of adults, the babies look at each other, smile, vocalize at one another, touch one another, give and take objects to and from one another, and gradually develop activities in common. This, it is claimed, they do at their own rhythm and in their own time, and without aggressiveness. Babies experience adults largely through touch, and it is important that handling of babies should be consistent and gentle, and be regarded as another form of communication, also as unobtrusive as possible.

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[11]This passage is an extract from Pickles book *Peaceful Babies, Contented Mothers*, first published in 1969. It is reprinted in the Bulletin of the Sensory Awareness Foundation, No 14, Winter 1994. The Sensory Awareness Foundation is a non-profit organization based in California, set up to promote the ideas of Loczy in the USA.

[12]As well as the Italian book, and the Sensory Awareness Foundation mentioned above, further information about Loczy is available in publications from the Loczy Institute translated into French. There are also popular articles in French and Belgian professional journals. These include: Institute Loczy: un foyer pour nourissons pas comme les autres: *Le Coq Heron. Bulletin d'un group d'etude du centre Etienne Marcel.* No 53. 1975. Paris Jaques Dupont: Relation a Travers le langage entre l'auxiliaire et les enfants du group: *Vers l'Education Nouvelle.* No. 419. 1988. Paris. Qu'est-ce que l'autonomie des le premier age? L'Enfant. No. 3-4. 1984. Brussels. Bébés et jeunes enfants entre eux: que vivent des bébés en groupe. Dialogue. No. 120. 1993. (2).Lyon/Paris. France Quercy.

Children should be treated as essentially autonomous, self-directing and communicating with each other even although they obviously rely on adults to set the scene which makes such autonomy possible. This applies to children at home as well as in day care. I have described the successes — and the drawbacks — of this style of working elsewhere.[13] Where it is carried out to the letter, its results are very impressive, but like any system it is contingent on the commitment and ability of those who follow it.

Malaguzzi and Reggio Emilia: Dialogue and documentation

An alternative, and better known, approach to working with young children, from babyhood to starting school, has also been developed in Italy, by Loris Malaguzzi, a psychologist who worked in the North Italian commune (town) of Reggio Emilia. Malaguzzi stressed the importance of continual dialogue about practice, which he stressed could only really be a true dialogue where there was public and communal support and interest in working with young children. He insisted that:

> *Our aim is to make a place of research, learning, revisiting, reconsideration and reflection..anyone who undertakes a project or a task thinks about actions that transform existing situations into new, desired ones. In our approach we proceed by making plans, considering options, making cognitive reflections and symbolic representations, and refining communication skills..what is most appreciated all along is the shared sense of accomplishment as individuals and as a group.*[14]

Malaguzzi's theory is less a theory about infancy, than a theory about the organization and support of daily practice. He argues that development and progress in work with young children is only possible in a truly communal system, where parents, children, educators, and the wider community, take seriously and discuss how children should be cared for and educated. The nurseries in Reggio Emilia began as self-organized day care collectives, whose funding was taken over and extended by the local authority. There is a long and continuous history of endeavour to improve practice, which has made the nurseries world famous, although many outside observers find it

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[13]*Comparing Nurseries* — ibid

[14]Malaguzzi, L (1993). For an education based on Relationships. *Young Children*. November 1993. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children

difficult to recognize the importance of the communal system so heavily stressed by Malaguzzi and his followers, and attribute the outcomes to other factors.[15]

At the time that the Reggio Emilia nurseries were first set up, there were a number of experiments in collective child care, in Germany and Spain as well as Italy. These have been described by Chiara Saraceno.[16] They arose partly through the events of 1968, a disatisfaction with what were perceived to be authoritarian education systems, and a view that nurseries, being outside of mainstream education, were a good place to experiment; but as importantly they were a reaction to the view that a mother's place was in the home. It was regarded as important to prove that women could organize constructively to share the tasks of child-rearing, and to do so in an informed and educated way. *The importance of those years..was the rediscovery — or the discovery for the first time in Italy — that there were means of socialization which did not involve each one of us separately, on our own or with the help of specialists, that we could share collective values and organization* (Saraceno: author's translation)

This tradition has persisted most forcefully in Reggio Emilia in Italy, where Malaguzzi was an exceptionally dedicated and innovative supporter of the first attempts to develop collective care.

Danish age-integrated systems: Natural child care

Another way of considering the balance and importance of the various relationships experienced by young children is that pursued in mixed age centres in Denmark, an increasingly popular form of provision. Here the emphasis is on recreating "natural learning situations", where children are allowed to be free from interference as possible in using their surroundings, utilizing sibling support.[17]

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[15]See note 2 above.

[16]Saraceno, Chiara (1972). *Dall' educazione antiautoritaria all' educazione socialista*. De Donato. Bari. Italy. There were also some shortlived experiments in the 1970's in the UK, of which the most well known was a collective nursery in Camden, London, called 123.

[17]Dunn, J. (1993). *Young Children's Close Relationships. Beyond Attachment: Individual Differences and Development series. 4*. London. Sage. Dunn argues in a series of publications that the importance of siblings and friends have been consistently underestimated in young children. *Friends can create a world of great involvement and high adventure...they must co-ordinate their efforts with all the virtuosity of an accomplished jazz quartet and they must manage the amount of conflict between them. This requires enormous social skill.*

To increase the opportunities for mixed age interactions is important for development because a child in such a situation can experiment with a variety of different social situations. In mixed age groups children can play and learn at different levels.[18]

The most common (although certainly not the only) format for provision is a centre for about 60 childen 0-6, divided into three groups. These groups may differ at different times of the day: various ages being combined to make larger or smaller groups, but children are free to mix, and brothers and sisters can stay together. In those mixed-age centres which also include after-school children (for example for children 0-14) older children are positively encouraged to care for and play with little ones and to involve them in a variety of indoor and outdoor projects. *In traditional play cultures games may be played throughout life — from the first sounds of a 6 months old baby to choral works sung by adults, from the first jump of a two year old to dancing with older children, from a child of 18 months playing with a tea set whilst listening to a group story session about the meaning of life and the blessings of the feast.* [19]The Danish system is a welfare-based but universal system, rather than an educational system. As such it poses itself against the education system, and is very relaxed, informal, and playful, with an emphasis on creative and the practical everyday tasks of living, and with easy-going timetables. *Children's development, well-being and self-reliance must be promoted: services must provide a secure and challenging everyday life with an emphasis on close contact between children and adults and children developing on their own terms through free play and their own space.* [20]

Different ideas about how young children relate to others, and what constitutes best practice in looking after them, varies considerably between different countries. Although all these ideas recognize the vulnerability of young children, their emphasis is different. In the UK the role of mothers and mother-adult figures as mediators of cognitive and emotional development of young children is emphasized, and other children are seen as possible sources of stress and rivalry. The Loczy system stresses the individuality and autonomy of the child, and the importance of adults not assuming that they play a pivotal role in relationships with young children. Some continental systems strongly emphasize the importance and continuity of the group of children as an emotional and learning support. Malaguzzi and his colleagues reflect on the capacity and necessity for social organization of those who care for and educate young children. The Danish

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[18]Jytte Jensen : Presentation to a European Childcare Network conference, Empoli, Italy, April 1991.

[19]BUPL.(National Union of Pedagogues) (1990) *Children and Adults in Day Care Centres.* Aarhus. Denmark, BUPL.

[20]Extract from the Danish contribution to the European Childcare Network Review of Services, ibid.

system emphasizes a natural, unintense setting, with a minimum of rules or prescriptions. These beliefs about what young children need and what works best in bringing them up, in turn influence other areas of provision and practice.

Health, safety and physical well-being

Medical models of child care have tended to stress hygiene and avoidance of disease and illness; welfare-based models have alerted parents to the importance of physical safety and protection against physical abuse and physical danger. Yet other models, most notably in the ex-communist countries, stress a more preventative approach to health and choose to emphasize physical well-being, that is regular nutritious food, systematic exercise or callisthenics, plenty of rest and regular health and dental check-ups. These ideas are discussed in turn.

Health and hygiene

The French and Francophile Belgian systems of publicly-funded crèches for children 0-2 are medically controlled. Liane Mozère has given an account of the crèche movement in France.[1] Publicly-funded crèches in France have a long history, dating back to 1844, and by 1902 in Paris there were 66, established primarily as a response to malnutrition and illness amongst poor working class families. By 1988, approximately 633,600 infants attended crèches—over 40% of working mothers with children under three. Mozère argues that these public crèches have largely retained their concerns with bodily welfare and their mission to educate mothers in matters of health care: Their function was the *education des merès en matierè de puericulture, diététique, hygiene, pris en charge du corps de l'enfant.*

A special qualification is required for those who work in crèches, as a puericultrice, or infant nurse. A particular emphasis of their work in the past was to maintain cleanliness and to minimize the dangers of infection. This view of the child as a possible source of contamination led to repressive regimes, and although the situation has changed, with more emphasis on education and development, this medical heritage is viewed by Mozère as a continuing and often negative one.

In January 1990, Mme. Helene Dorlhac, Secretary of State for Families, announced a publicly-funded expansion and liberalization of crèches in France, in order to achieve more compatibility between family and work, and money was set aside from CNAF (Caisse nationale d'allocations Familiales) for research and development into crèches. This allowed for local communes (districts) to set up their own "contrat crèches" and

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[1]Mozère, L.(1992). *Le Printemps des Crèches: histoire et analyse d'un mouvement.* Paris. Harmattan.

"crèche parentales," a parallel education and arts policy was launched from the Ministry of Culture, to try to reduce the tensions between homes and crèches by developing an artistic and cultural programme in the crèches. These initiatives for children under three included "une maison d'enfance" in a socially deprived area, which combined a crèche and a mother-child health centre; a 24 hour nursery which included an emergency nursing service for sick infants at home, and a linked childminding service; an "atrium" neighbourhood crèche which could also be used as a social venue for the neighbourhood; and a drop-in education centre for parents who were not working. These initiatives, whilst still within a medical framework, and employing mainly medically-trained staff, were intended to broaden the service from its original remit.[2]

In Belgium, the remit of the puericultrice is currently being examined by a team of experts, in conjunction with FRAJE, a professional organization which represents crèche workers, and argues for a shift from hygiene and physical care to a more educative approach.[3] The functions of the job, as before, have a medical orientation, and include detecting the first signs of illness, and/or its resurgence, avoiding cross infection, administering medication, preventing accidents, administering first aid, maintaining and encouraging cleanliness, giving baths, taking swabs and samples of urine, and preparing infants for medical examination. In addition the puericultrice must be alert to any signs of abuse, physical problems in the mother, or symptoms of dysfunction in the relationship between mother and child. However, within this medical framework, there is also an increased emphasis on general education and care routines for children, although as Mozère points out, such a medically based system is predicated on a notion of a specialized health professional, rather than on the actual condition of the children: *Pas de problèm avec les enfants, c'est avec les adultes qu'il y a des problemes. Écrire sur les crèches, c'est écrire sur les adultes.*

Health and safety

The UK regulatory system introduced in the 1989 Children Act lays down a framework for health and safety for out-of-home care. As discussed above, regulatory measures are necessary in order to control the private market and introduce minimum standards where the quality of care may otherwise be sacrificed to profitability. Moreover, the most unambiguous measures are the most simplistic. Whereas it is easy to measure the

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[2]Martine Felix, CNAF (1990). *La Politique d'emploi: Droit du travail et vie familiale.* Paris. CNAF.

[3]*Commission communautaire des professions et qualifications:recherche en education.* Ministere de la communaute francais, department enseignement recherche. Brussels. January 1997

number of toilets, or the provision or absence of a milk kitchen, as the European Childcare Network discussion documents suggest, many criteria are value based and relative.

The UK regulatory system specifies the number of square metres of space per child, a minimum of one washbasin for 10 children, nappy changing facilities, a milk kitchen, and so on. There is some leeway for local interpretation of these guidelines, for example the waiving of outdoor space in built up areas.[4] In general there is an emphasis on physical safety and the removal of any features of the physical environment which might conceivably lead to physical risk.[5]

Scandinavian systems are more permissive of physical risk-taking, and emphasize the importance of children learning to accommodate to climatic conditions and to outdoor physical environments. The European Childcare Network video depicts Danish nurseries where children, even those with disabilities, are encouraged to climb and ride bikes in the snow and ice, or build camp fires in the forest, with an accompanying text which stresses the importance of risk taking as a strategy for learning.

Diet and good eating

Diet is both a question of adequate nutrition for growth *and* a cultural issue. Eating is not merely a matter of routine ingestion of required vitamins and proteins, but a pleasurable and sociable activity. I have described how in all the publicly-funded nurseries I investigated in Italy and Spain, fresh food was an important issue and meals were celebratory. Cooks would not only never use ready processed or reheated frozen food, but would even make their own sheets of pasta, and provide jugs of freshly squeezed orange juice. They took pride in producing regional dishes for staff and

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[4]Despite these guidelines, the National Private Day Nurseries Association in England have argued that the regulations are unfairly applied and local authorities differ considerably in their interpretation. The guidelines are currently being rewritten

[5]Penn, H. (1988). *Practising Excellence*. London. Social Science Research Unit. Institute of Education, London University gives an account of the extreme surveillance and interpretations of "risk" in some nurseries, whereby young children are forbidden almost all physical exertion on the grounds they may lead to accidents.

children, even for very young children, for whom introduction to the tastes and textures of food was regarded as important.[6]

As medical anthropologists have shown, medical practice, like other professional procedures, is partly cultural, and different ailments are highlighted in different countries. In France "the liver" is often required as a source of well-being, and in need of attention. Proper time for digestion after the meal is regarded as sufficiently important for it to be included in popular advice for parents in magazines and advice booklets, and to be instituted into nursery regimes.

In the UK, although cooking has now become a highly fashionable profession, food for young children is frequently highly processed and involves little preparation—fish fingers, sausages and beefburgers, baked beans and frozen peas being regarded as staples of children's diet. This has been offset by two recent trends. Public concerns about food contamination in the wake of the beef crisis, when infected meat was widely distributed, and a very recent crisis about genetically modified foods, has led to an uptake in the use of organic and vegetarian foods, and at least one major nursery chain has used its wholefood policy as part of its sales pitch. The Food Commission, an independent advocacy group, has published a book on nursery food which highlights "clean" eating for children.[7] A second trend emphasizes the need for cultural sensitivity in the many ethnically diverse communities in the UK, and "ethnic" food such as samosas or pitta bread is now included in many nursery diets. In the postwar period in the UK regular dietary supplements were provided for children as part of a healthcare strategy — such as cod liver oil and orange juice. However there is now no regulatory requirement or policy consensus about diet for young children, it being regarded as a private matter of parental choice and responsibility.

In many local authorities in Denmark, as in some of the private sector in the UK, it is customary to expect children to bring their own food, prepared baby food for very young children, or packed lunches for older children. This is partly cultural, partly a question of cost and convenience, and partly a view about the extent of parental responsibility and choice.

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[6] *Comparing Nurseries*. ibid. For instance, I watched a nursery worker persuading a child of 8 months to taste baclau, the regional dish of dried salted cod, soaked and desalinated, and mixed with potato in deep fried balls.

[7] Whiting, M. and Lobstein, T (1997). *The Nursery Food Book*. London. Arnold.

Exercise and rest

The spaciousness of out-of-home facilities for young children depends on their location. In city centres in particular, space is at a premium. Increased traffic, high-rise living, and sedentary activities such as television and computer games, have dramatically reduced the mobility of young children, and the lack of exercise of children is now a cause for concern in some countries. Environmental policies such as bans on car parking, pro-bicyclist policies, and forest kindergartens, discussed below, can secure more space for young children to play. The increased use of health clubs, jogging, aerobics and other forms of exercise for adults, may lead to further recognition that young children left to themselves will not get sufficient exercise through spontaneous play, and some strategic intervention may be needed, even for very young children.

In Norway and Finland, children are expected to engage in outdoor physical pursuits early on and by five would be able to ski and swim.[8] Music and dance sessions to encourage physical development are also commonplace in Finnish and Danish nurseries. An additional strategy is to introduce regular exercise sessions in nurseries. This was most notably undertaken in communist countries, whose intention was to produce fighting fit children—metaphorically and literally. Some kindergarten regimes included regular 20 minute exercise or calisthenics sessions throughout the day. Visitors to China have commented on the exercise routines in Chinese kindergartens in very densely inhabited cities such as Beijing or Shanghai. Kindergartens were generally large—300 or 400 children was not uncommon. At least four exercise sessions would be included in a day. All children, even as young as two years, would file to their own preassigned spot on the playground, or roof, and for twenty minutes would perform brisk and graceful exercises to loudspeaker music and instructions.[9] Many Eastern European systems also include regular exercise sessions for children, although these have often involved quasi-military activities such as goose-stepping, and always involve group instruction. However, it is also highly likely that such exercise sessions produce fitter children.

Rest is another health issue. For children of working parents, the time spent outside home can be ten hours or more. This is a long time for a young child to be "on the go". A mid-day rest or quiet period or "siesta" is typically a feature of Southern European countries for adults as well as children, and many nurseries are organized to provide a

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[8]Central Union for Child Welfare in Finland. (1983). *Childhood in Finland*

[9]Kessen et al., ibid. This communal exercise, whilst it may have seemed bizarre to Western observers, is part of a wider Chinese tradition. Most parks in the early morning are full of people of all ages doing Tai Chi or other on the spot exercises.

rest period, with special sleeping accommodation. In the UK, by comparison, few nurseries now operate such rest periods for children once they no longer need cots, or devote separate space for them.[10]

Health and safety then can be interpreted in various ways, and certain aspects of health and well-being emphasized at the expense of others.

[10]Rest routines used to be a regular feature of British nurseries up to the 1970's, when most provision became part-time, and it was no longer considered necessary. Also the "child-centred" and individualistic approach to childrearing meant that it was perceived as an imposition on children to insist on the same rest routine for each child. Goldschmied and Jackson describe sleeping in nursery as a source of friction between parents and nursery workers, since parents want to put their children to bed in the early evening, and if the children sleep during the day, they do not want to go to bed until later.

Education content and styles of instruction

There is widespread contemporary acceptance of the importance of early learning, and the rapid, almost daily, increase in competence and skills shown by infants and young children. In particular there is a voluminous literature on language development in young children, which illustrates the magical speed at which most children acquire words and learn grammar, and become reasoners and thinkers. But what role should adults play in this learning? How can the organization of daily life best enhance children's learning ?

As the previous sections suggest, the emphasis put on the development of learning and cognition depends on other assumptions made about the values and organization of out of home care for infants. It depends on views about the mediating role of the adult carer, on assumptions about the existence or strength of the child's own emotions and rhythms, about the functions of toys and other especially designed child learning materials, on the perception of the importance of the group as a learning environment, and on the balance between surveillance and promoting health and safety, and trusting children with the freedom to explore and learn out of the range of adult gaze. As we have seen already, these assumptions lead to different kinds of practices.

Language learning

If language acquisition is a central issue in learning and development, then one would expect language learning and bilingualism to be key issues. The linguistic contexts vary considerably across Europe. In many major cities there are sizeable first or second generation immigrant populations, often from ex-colonial countries in the majority world— for example Bangladeshi and Nigerian populations in the UK, North African populations in France, Surinese populations in the Netherlands, Turkish in Germany and The Netherlands. There are also current waves of immigration and asylum seekers from war-torn countries including those of Eastern Europe. One of the difficulties facing such immigrants and refugees is the devaluation and ignorance in the host country of their own language as a serious medium of learning.[1]

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[1] Marion Molteno ran an adult education programme for immigrants in London, and is now the education adviser for Save the Children UK. Her novel *A Shield of Coolest Air* (Shola books 1994) is a brilliant and moving personal account of Somali refugees in London, and the difficulties experienced by Somali children in reconciling the language and oral culture of their homeland, with the expectations of a literate English schooling.

In addition there are a number of countries where regional identities are being reasserted, such as Catalonia in Spain, Wales in the UK, Gaelic in Ireland, and non-Russian languages in some of the new Baltic states. In these countries linguistic policies are a key strategy in recreating a lost or previously suppressed regional identity.[2] Some countries have a number of parallel language groupings — for example Flemish and French in Belgium, Swedish, Finnish and Sami in Finland. Where parallel language communities exist, some overlap of materials and personnel is possible. In Finland for example many municipalities provide day care services where children can intentionally hear other languages spoken.[3]

A number of countries have indigenous minorities — these include the Roma or gipsy communities in Eastern Europe and Spain and to a lesser extent in the UK, Ireland and France; the Sami in Scandinavia, the Bretons in France and the Gaels in Scotland, whose language traditions are very different from the mainstream. These minorities have been or still are the subject of persecution — most notably persecution against the Roma people[4] — and the status and continuation of their language is highly problematic. The only country which has an inclusive educational and language policy for young children from indigenous groups is New Zealand, where the early years curriculum, te Whakiri, is bi-partisan English-Maori.[5] Although New Zealand is a small country, this is an important initiative and contrasts with Canada and the USA where indigenous language concerns have only so far been resolved through isolationist measures focusing on native reserves.

See also Rutter, J. and Hyder, T (1998). *Refugee Children in the Early Years: Issues for policy makers and providers*. London. Refugee Council/Save the Children

[2]One of the most comprehensive accounts of language policy is that of Shirley Brice Heath (1972). *Telling Tongues: Language Policy in Mexico*. New York. Teacher's College Press. She traces the development of language policies in Mexico, where Spanish competed with several dozen Mexican-Indian languages, including the Aztec language Nauhatl, as a means of communication and instruction.

[3]National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health. (1997). Children from 0-7: *Care and education services in Finland*. Helsinki.

[4](ed). Costarelli, S. (1992) *Children of Minorities: Gipsies*.Florence. UNICEF International Child Development Centre.

[5]Early Childhood Education Project: *Early Childhood Education in New Zealand: Final Report of the Early Childhood Education Project*. Wellington. New Zealand. NZEI. The most recent account of the New Zealand Early Years Curriculum is by Margaret Carr and Helen May: Te Whäkiri. in (ed) H.Penn: *Early Childhood Services: Theory, Policy and Practice*. Milton Keynes. Open University Press, forthcoming.

Most often the mother tongue of young children is ignored in out-of-home care, if it is not the same as the mainstream language. This is partly because immigrants traditionally find it harder to access care or training, and because the standard training of those who work with young children is often too basic to include issues of linguistic identity and language teaching.[6] There are a variety of strategies which have been pursued in different countries to address the needs of children whose mother tongue is not mainstream. These include assimilation, in which children and their carers are encouraged to learn the language of the country in which they reside as soon as possible,[7] bi-lingual language support,[8] and deliberate introduction of regional language, such as Catalan, Welsh or Gaelic as the medium of instruction and communication for all who use the service, whatever their mother tongue.[9] [10]

The curriculum

The question of how much young children's learning should be planned, shaped and encouraged, or whether young children will naturally and informally model themselves on their caretakers, is increasingly an issue. The Spanish Education Reform Act (LOGSE) is the most comprehensive legislative attempt to address this issue, and the Act makes infant care a function of the education system, and draws up a very broad curriculum for children 0-3 and 3-6. Within this curriculum, there is considerable room for regional or commune (district or city) initiatives, and for initiatives at the level of the nursery itself. I have described elsewhere how the determination to make children aware of their

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[6]See Rutter and Hyder ibid.

Mozère, L (1997). *Informalites sans protection*. Marseilles. Centre d'Etudes de Recherches et de Formations Institutionelles du sud-est. This research report describes the marginalization of North African childminders in France, who almost always work outside the formal registration system of family day care.

[7]For instance in the 1980's Sweden had a deliberate assimilationist policy in which immigrant families had first of all to attend special centres or nurseries, for accelerated learning of Swedish. Mostly however such assimilation is likely to be by default — it is assumed that young children learn language so readily that there is little problem about using the host country language.

[8]For instance the SESAM project in Utrecht, Netherlands, offers bilingual group care in Dutch-Surinam and Dutch-Turkish.

[9]See *Comparing Nurseries*. ibid. For a description of the use of Catalan in nurseries.

[10]The *Now* Local Development, Training and Child Care Network, a European-wide group-based in Flemish speaking Belgium at the University of Ghent, issued a newsletter *Now*, of which the second edition, Autumn 93 gives examples of individual projects in France, Ireland, Greece, Belgium and the UK, which attempt to address language and culture issues in early childhood.

cultural heritage in Barcelona, led to exceptional programmes where classical music was routinely played and discussed with very young children, and where the work of regional artists such as Miro figured prominently in the display and activities of the nurseries.[11]

Goldschmied and Jackson, within their key worker framework, argue for a particular kind of play in infant care.[12] Whilst arguing that adult care and attention are much more crucial than play, nevertheless they consider the play environment should be structured. *It is right and reasonable to value some kinds of play more highly than others, to create conditions in which children are more likely to choose particular activities, to encourage complex concentrated play.* (9). They developed the notion of the treasure basket, and heuristic Play. The treasure basket is a wicker basket of everyday objects made of natural materials, and is intended to stimulate the sense of touch, smell, taste, sound and sight— corks, large pebbles, fir cones, a loofah, a lemon, an eggcup, tin lids, a leather purse and so on. The items in the basket should be continually replenished and kept in good condition. They argue that letting babies play with these treasure baskets promotes an intensity of concentration far greater than that evoked by conventional manufactured toys. They develop this idea further with the notion of heuristic play for toddlers.

> *Children are not interested in puzzles or putting pegs in their proper holes and would usually rather throw them on the floor. In fact the child is saying to us, there are other things I want to do first. Their level of competence cannot be satisfied by play material where there is a right answer, determined by adults. Children feel a great urge to explore and discover for themselves the way objects behave in space as they manipulate them They need a wide variety of objects with which to do this experimentation, objects which are constantly new and interesting, and which certainly cannot be bought from a toy catalogue... Heuristic play is an approach and not a description. There is no one right way to it and people in different settings will have their own ideas and collect their own materials(p.120).*

Within many communist countries, the curriculum is didactic. Loosely based on interpretations of the Russian psychologists Vygotsky and Luria (whose work has been rather differently interpreted in the West) learning is seen as a cultural process by which adults inescapably structure or scaffold the worlds of children. Therefore, the most systematic analysis of what children need to learn, and how adults might contribute to that learning is necessary. This has resulted in very detailed curriculum guides in many

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[11]See *Comparing Nurseries*. ibid, and Marta Mata y Garriga, ibid.

[12]Goldschmied and Jackson ibid

countries — the Chinese preschool curriculum before 1990 ran to 18 volumes. From as early as 18 months children might have short bursts of instruction, where teachers, often with considerable grace and energy and enthusiasm, (and because of the ethos of group progress and group support, rarely punitively) introduce certain prescribed ideas or concepts, or teach songs or poems. One of the most striking — and for some observers, chilling — aspects of such systems is how children learn to listen and pay attention, and when slightly older, to perform set texts or musical pieces. As with many other aspects of communist life, curricular systems became ossified and closed to change [13] but as Kessen comments, for young children such approaches which emphasize listening and performance, may also offer both stimulation and the security that comes from very predictable routines.[14]

By contrast, Scandinavian child care is very relaxed and easy going. In particular the Danish system devolves responsibility for defining and planning the educational -and other — activities to parents and staff, and when possible, to children themselves. Children, younger ones alongside older, may be involved in plans or projects that go on for some time.

> *The decision making processes in Denmark are decentralized to a considerable degree. There are very few regulations, plans or circulars to determine the way in which staff should work with children. This means parents and staff must decide the daily — and annual — activities at each centre. Consequently the activities and atmosphere of Danish child care centres vary considerably — which often surprises visitors from abroad. This (decentralization) means that high levels of commitment among parents and staff can be maintained. Ideas can quickly be put into practice and great flexibility is ensured...for example a centre may be busy for weeks, preparing circus performances. The children act as tightrope walkers, animal trainers and clowns...The activities vary a lot, but the common denominator is the children's enthusiasm for the activity they're involved in. (p. 12)*[15]

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[13]Calder, P (1996). Ideologies, Policies and Practices in East Berlin before and after the fall of the Wall. *International Journal of Early Years Education.* V 4(3) 1996

[14]Kessen et al ibid.

[15]Tuft, K and Jensen, C (1990). *Childhood and Youth Institutions and Staff Education.* Aarhus. University of Aarhus, Denmark.

Individuality and normality

One of the ways in which systems differ is in the importance they assign to individual learning and group learning. Crudely put, a "child-centred" approach to learning sees each child as an individual for whom there is an optimum level of competence, which is best gained through individual attention to individual performance; a system in which difference and competitiveness is often stressed. A more "group-centred" approach to learning stresses the importance for everyone of taking part in the same activities and achieving the same basic level of competence, and group solidarity and support is regarded as more important than individual prowess or performance. In practice the difference is not usually so clear cut, and there is a continuum between these approaches. But in both cases there are issues about those children whose competencies are, for reasons of physical or mental disability, considerably different from their peers. Should such children merit special attention? Who should give it to them, and when and where?

In many countries there is a view that children with disabilities should receive some kind of specialized remedial intervention, and that the earlier disabilities are diagnosed the more effective treatment is likely to be. In other instances there is a view that it is morally wrong to segregate children with disabilities, and they should receive the same opportunities as any other children.

The Salamanca Agreement is an international agreement, signed in 1994 by 92 Governments and a host of international agencies including UNESCO and UNICEF, which states that:

> *every child has a fundamental right to education and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning...mainstream(regular) education is..the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all.*[16]

The Salamanca agreement states that early childhood education has *a major economic value for the individual, the family and the society in preventing the aggravation of disabling conditions. Programmes at this level should recognize the principle of inclusion and be developed in a comprehensive way by combining pre-school activities and early childhood health care.*

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[16]*World Needs Conference on Special Needs Education*: Access and Quality. Salamanca. Spain 7-10th June, 1994. Salamanca. UNESCO/Ministry of Education and Science, Spain.

Spain, as a major contributor to the Salamanca agreement, has well-articulated policies on disability in LOGSE, the Spanish Education Reform Act discussed above. In infant nurseries children with disabilities usually count for two places, and every effort is made to bring the specialist services to the nursery, rather than require parents to attend specialist therapeutic sessions elsewhere.[17]

Patricia Potts and her colleagues at the Open University in the UK argue that in a fragmented market-driven system such as the UK the complexity, instability and regional variability of services for preschool children lead to inequalities in the experiences of young children and their families. Within the current framework, parents may have access to specialist services but they only rarely have the choice of an appropriate service provided in a more comprehensive setting.[18] Whilst there are some fully integrated settings where children with disabilities can use local facilities and receive specialist support within them, in the UK the most common form of intervention for children who are diagnosed as having "developmental delay" is a Child Development Centre. These may be multi-disciplinary, but they are primarily medical in orientation and are usually funded by health authorities. Children are typically given medical and psychological assessments, and monitored through part time visits, when they may also receive some kind of remedial attention. The Portage system, a checklist and set of routinized activities for helping parents deal with developmental delays in their children, is also in widespread use in the UK.[19]

In many Eastern European countries children with disabilities are excluded from mainstream provision, and specialized provision is offered separately. The Peto Institute in Hungary has become well known for its attempts to rehabilitate physically disabled children through intensive exercise programmes, in order that they can then cope better within mainstream — rather than expecting the mainstream to make adaptations.[20] Feuerstein, an Israeli psychologist, has taken a similar approach to mediated learning for children with mental disabilities. His model, widely used in Israel and the USA also argues for intensive and highly specialized rehabilitation before

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[17]See *Comparing Nurseries*, ibid.

[18](ed)Potts, P.(1992) *Learning for All: Right from the Start*. Open University Unit 5 Education Course. Milton Keynes. Open University.

[19]The Portage system was developed in Portage Wisconsin, USA, as a home visiting programme for young children with developmental delays.

[20](ed) Sutton, A.(1989) *Foundation for Conductive Education. Education Conference Two years on* : Proceedings of the Education Conference, School of Education, University of Birmingham.

children can enter mainstream facilities, and one of his books has the revealing title *Don't Accept Me as I Am: Helping Retarded People to Excel.*[21]

Ideas about infant education, and daily practices, vary considerably across Europe, even where there is a shared understanding of the child developmental literature. Ideas about education in turn lead to ideas about educators — who should be responsible for the care and education of young children, and how should they be trained and remunerated?

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[21]Feuerstein, R., Rand, Y. and Ryndas, J.E. (1988). *Don't Accept Me as I Am: Helping Retarded People to Excel.* New York. Plenum Press.

Training and employment of those who work with young children

Models of training

Who should care for and teach young children? How professional a task should it be? What should the content of any training include? What is the relationship between initial and continuous training? What kind of conditions of work and remuneration should be offered to those who care for children?

As Peter Moss has pointed out,[1] and as this paper has continually emphasized, the answer to all these questions depends on a wider value system about young children and their status in society. Oberhuemer and Ulich[2] distinguish three basic models of training for work with young children:

i) the social pedagogue model, whereby workers are trained to graduate level to work with children aged 0-18 in a variety of care — but not education — settings — a model most highly developed in Denmark.
ii) the infant teacher model, whereby workers are trained to two or three years post 18 in a higher post-secondary education institute or university to work with children 0-3 or 0-5 with an emphasis on learning and development — a model most highly developed in Spain.
iii)a puéricultrice or health model, whereby workers are trained for one or two years post 18 to work with children 0-3, with an emphasis on health needs — a model most highly developed in France and Belgium.

These models are all institutionally-based; that is the basic training takes place within a designated institution of higher education and outside of work — although the training may well be modular and undertaken on a sandwich basis rather than on a continuous basis. Difficulties arise when there are very many kinds of services with little cohesion between them, and the same training must span the many different kinds of circumstances in which young children are cared for. Generally training reflects services, and the models listed above are an outcome of cohesive planning of services at a governmental level.

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[1]Report to the OECD on training in early years services. 1999 forthcoming.

[2]Oberhuemer, P. and Ulich, M. (1997). *Working with Young Children in Europe: Provision and Staff Training*. London. Paul Chapman.

Within a number of countries, including the UK, there is an increasing emphasis on competency-based assessment, whereby workers are assessed in their workbase on the level of competency they show for the work they do, for which they may be awarded an NVQ, a vocational qualification in child care. Until recently the main qualification for working with infants in the UK was the NNEB or nursery nursing qualification, which was a basic vocational course for two years post 16. This qualification, which was free standing, is being phased to run parallel with the NVQ. The proponents of NVQ argues that it benefits women who have cared for children for many years, but have not had the opportunity to formalize their qualifications — for instance childminders or family day carers. It also means that in a very diverse situation, as in the UK, where there are many forms of care, including care in the private market, workers can be assessed on the actual work they do.[3] Critics of this approach argue that in fact it confirms women in low status positions as workers, and does not give them the breadth of training, and the opportunities for reflection beyond their immediate workplace. Also their employers may be responsible for assessing them, which may put them at a disadvantage in some workplaces. Susan Christopherson, reviewing the evidence for OECD, suggests that caring work is very skilful *"a confluence of skills which combine head, hand and heart, that is technical skills, physical skills and emotional communication skills"*[4] and that conventional competency ratings may underestimate such skills. Margaret Carr and Helen May, drawing on their work in New Zealand,[5] distinguish between competency-based models and institution-based models of training as follows:

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[3]Owen, S. and Thorpe, G. (1998). *Praxis NVQ early years assessment centre — a case study: putting the candidate at the heart of the process.* in (eds) L. Abbott and G. Pug. Training in the Early Years. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

[4]Christopherson, S. (1997). *Childcare and Elderly Care: What Occupational Opportunities for Women?* Paris. OECD. Labour Market and Social Policy Occasional Papers. No.27.

[5]Carr, M. and May, H.(1993). Choosing a Model: Reflecting on the Development Process of Te Whāriki, National Early Childhood Curriculum Guidelines in New Zealand, *International Journal of Early Years Education*, Vol 1 (3) 7-22

Competency model	Teacher change model
Teacher education is like adding layers and each layer represents a competency clearly separated	Teacher education is about challenging preconceptions and beliefs. The earlier layers are not left intact
The domains or units are clearly separated	The units are interconnected and influence each other
The competencies are measurable against a standard which can be precisely defined	The knowledge skills and attitudes are assessed by judgements and criteria Cannot always be precisely defined
The units are developed from clusters of roles or jobs in the workplace	The units are developed from reflections on the problematic, the dilemmas of Teaching and content knowledge
The units are portable from one domain to another	Most units are regarded as context-specific. Contexts are not just sites for technical competency, but have historical, cultural and sociological perspectives
Learning is sequential and cumulative	Learning may be sequential but not necessarily so. It may also be in the form of networks of knowledge - a 'weaving' model rather than a 'steps' model.

In-service or continuous training

Is a qualification the beginning or the end of training? The emphasis on life-long learning in many fields arises out of the need for workers to continually adapt and update skills in an increasingly volatile labour market.[6] In many countries the onus is on the child care worker (once qualified) to seek extra training from a variety of sources, including training sponsored by the employer. In the Spanish and Italian nurseries described in *Comparing Nurseries* workers typically worked a 36 hour week, of which six hours was non-contact time set aside for planning and in-service training. In Reggio Emilia, as described above, such "thinking" time underpins the service.

In a number of countries advocacy or professional organizations representing infant/nursery staff organize in-service or summerschool training with (or without) the

[6]OECD. (1994). *Women and Structural Change*. New Perspectives. Paris

support of the employer or state, and may also publish professional journals about local practice. FRAJE[7] in Brussels and Rosa Sensat[8] in Barcelona are two well-known organizations that combine advocacy with professional advice and training, and offer comprehensive coverage to those working in the services. In the UK, where provision is much more fragmented, there is less consensus about which organization might best represent the interests of early years staff, and there is considerable competition between them for advocacy and training resources.

Professionals vs non-professionals

One of the legacies of attachment theory has been a view that young children are better off in home situations than in any kind of institutional care. Informal, homely, attentive care is seen as "better than" the routines and practices of institutional life. Various kinds of childminding or family day care arrangements, where young children are placed in someone else's home whilst their mothers work, officially exist in most — but not all — European countries.[9] In some countries they are seen as a legitimate extension of the state system, offering parents additional choice, and the childminders are not only regulated and licensed, but partly paid, trained and supported by the state. Substantial state-sponsored childminding schemes exist in Scandinavia, France, Belgium and Portugal. Other countries, such as the UK, regulate and inspect family day care[10], but do not have any kind of widespread sponsoring. The interests of family day carers are represented by an international advocacy association, The Family Daycare Organization (IFDCO) founded in 1987.

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[7]FRAJE — Centre de formation permanente et de recherche dans les milieux d'accueil du jeune enfante — Brussels

[8]Rosa Sensat is named after a famous Spanish early years teacher, and has a library and information service in Barcelona. It has a publishing remit and publishes a regular early years magazine for practitioners, *Infancia*, which has nation-wide coverage, as well as more scholarly research monographs. It organizes teacher exchanges, summer schools, and runs various kinds of training programmes.

[9]Karlsson, M. (1995). *Family Daycare in Europe*. Report prepared for the European Commission Network on Childcare. Brussels. DGV 5187/95

[10]Under the 1989 Children Act, childminders are restricted to looking after three children under five, including their own. They must be "fit persons" i.e. not have any kind of criminal record, and their homes must meet health, safety and fire regulations. They are inspected annually.

Mozère, in a recent series of papers, explored licensed and unlicenced childminding arrangements in France. [11] She argued that most women chose to mind children not out of any generous maternal feelings, but because of a particular set of domestic finances — those choosing to mind unofficially without being licensed were immigrants, or had family members working in the black market, or for some other reason had domestic circumstances which could not bear official scrutiny. Paradoxically those who did get licensed saw it as a step towards professionalism, towards leaving motherhood and finding another occupation.

Non-institutional/informal approaches are not necessarily polarized between family day care and other forms of care. From different perspectives, various commentators have argued about the relationship between early childhood institutions and the wider society, and the need for early childhood to be reflective of the communities in which they are situated, including understandings of who might work with young children. Gisela Erler argues that in Germany *the system should be open for children of different ages and backgrounds, mixing experiences...this means that the professional teachers need to include neighbourhood people, artists, grandparents, older children in the sepctrum of activities available. It means that the role of professionals, paraprofessionals and ordinary people needs to be redefined.*[12] Moss and Penn also make a similar point in their book arguing for a radical extension of conventional nursery education.[13]

Parents and professionals

A related issue concerns the role of parents in provision. Put at its simplest, there have been concerns about whether parents are undermined by professionals. If people need to train and obtain qualifications to look after babies and young children, then what are the implications for parents who have no such training? *"Parents are the first educators"* is a rhetoric put forward by professionals in response to this contradiction. There have been a variety of strategies to address this issue:

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[11]Mozère, L. (1998) *Entre familialisme et precarite. Petits metiers urbains au "feminin": le cas des assistantes maternelles et nourrices*. Paris. CNAF. 97: 474

[12]Erler, G.A. (1989). *Early Childcare — A Challenge to Social Ecology*. Munich. Paper for the Deutschen Jugendinstitut.

[13]Moss, P and Penn, H. (1996). *Transforming Nursery Education*. London. Paul Chapman.

- collective provision. There are a variety of schemes including the French crèche parentales, in which parents share the care with paid workers and are paid to do so;[14] and similar schemes in Germany covering a slightly wider age range. [15]
- parent/community controlled but professionally provided services. There are a number of projects, such as the state funded projects described above in Reggio Emilia and in Denmark, and also in Portugal under the influence of Freinet,[16] where decision making about daily practice is devolved to a local level.[17] There are some non-profit projects in the UK, where parents set up and are intimately involved in the management and running of the centres, and indeed may be responsible for hiring and firing the professionals, but who are dependent on grants for their survival and tend to be shorter lived.
- mother and toddler and playgroup provision [18] where parents run the provision, work in it, usually minimally paid — and organize their own training. This is a common pattern of provision in the Netherlands and the UK, but the provision is part-time, in the case of the UK often under 10-12 hours a week.
- home visiting and parent education; there are various schemes in all the countries mentioned where parents are either visited at home by some kind of health or educational visitor who may give them advice about child development and care; or else parents are encouraged to come into a centre to receive such advice or take parenting classes. These are aimed primarily at non-working mothers.

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[14]Tijus, C.,Santolini, A. and Danis, A.(1995). *Study of the environment of the disadvantaged child in parent-run pre-schools*. The Hague. Final Report to the Van Leer Foundation.

[15]Jaekel, M. (1997). *Parent-Community Nurseries in West Germany*. Unpublished paper. Munisch. Deutschen Jugendinstitut.

[16]Celestin Freinet was a French educationalist at the turn of the century who emphasized the importance of the community and work undertaken in the local community, as a context for planning the activities of the nursery and the school. His work has been influential in Portugal, and there are many nurseries which have based themselves on his work, most notably the nurseries and schools run by Misercordia, the Catholic charity. For more information see Freinet, C.(1993). *Education du travail (Education Through Work: A Model for Child Centred Learning)*. Translated by John Sivell. New York: Edwin Mellin Press.

[17]Fiona Williams, Professor of Social Policy at Leeds University, in an unpublished paper entitled *Good Enough Principles for Welfare* uses the phrase "participatory parity" to describe those grassroots movements where democratic participation implies the recognition of the full or equal moral worth of all participants, whatever their circumstances or background.

[18]The playgroup movement in Britain has relaunched itself as the Preschool Learning Alliance, and playgroups may choose to call themselves "preschools".

Gender

The European Childcare Network has published several booklets and reviews on men as carers.[19] Men form a very small percentage of the workforce in most countries, but Eric Haugland, on the basis of experiences in Norway suggests that strategies can be developed which encourage the recruitment of men. The Norwegian Ministry has adopted a plan which includes promoting cultural change through public advocacy, setting long term goals for recruitment of 20% men in five years and 40% men in ten years. The first goal has already been achieved, although only some of these will be working with very young children.[20]Jensen reports that in Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and Spain between 3% and 8% of workers with infants are men.[21]

There has been some concern about the potential for abuse if men work with young children. Workers from the Sheffield Children's Centre, a community nursery in the UK, who have always had a policy of employing equal numbers of men and women on the staff, argue that *"the protection of workers and the protection of children go hand in hand"* and that where there is discussion and debate and valuing of workers, as well as careful organization, problems of abuse are less likely.[22]

Management and organization

Traditionally nurseries are hierarchically organized and a number of recent publications draw attention to the need to develop leadership and management skills in nurseries.[23] There is also a diagnostic test developed in the USA by Paula Jorde Bloom on the nursery as a workplace environment.[24]

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[19]Jensen, J. (1995). *Men as Workers for Young Children*. European Childcare Network. Brussels. DGV. Ghedini, P., Chandler T., Whalley, M. and Moss, P. (1995). *Fathers, Nurseries and Childcare*. European Childcare Network. DGV.

[20]Haugland, E (1998). *Are there effective strategies for developing a mixed-gender workforce in childcare?* in (eds) C.Owen, C. Cameron, and P.Moss. *Men as Workers in Services for Young Children: Issues of a Mixed Gender Workforce*. Bedford Way Papers, Institute of Education, London University. pp 193-199.

[21]Jensen, J (1998). *Men as Workers in Childcare Services: A European Perspective*. in Owen et al. ibid. pp118-131.

[22]Bateman, A (1998). *Child Protection, Risk and Allegations*. in Owen et al. ibid. pp182-189.

[23]Rodd, J. (1997). *The Pathway to Professionalism*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press. Whalley, M., Whittaker, P. and Cowley, L. (1998). Leadership and Management in Early Years Settings. London. NCB.

[24]Jorde-Bloom, P. (1988). *Early Childhood Work Environment Survey*. Illinois.

However in a number of countries, leadership and management skills are regarded as less important than collective participation in decision making. In Spain and Italy in particular there has been a tradition of collective organization, whereby there are no managers at nursery level; in other countries the role is regarded as more nominal.[25]

Christopherson points out that where carers or workers are unionized, conditions tend to be better than where workers are not unionized.[26] In Scandinavia where workers are unionized, conditions of work and pay compare favourably with those of other professions, and in Denmark BUPL, the organization which represents pedagogues, has played a leading role in the development and policy making for services to young children.[27] However in other countries no single union represents the spread of workers, and a majority of staff are not unionized.[28]

There is therefore a range of strategies concerning the training and employment of those working with young children. These include the models of training which are available, the roles of non-professionals, and the support and organization of those who work with young children.

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[25]See *Comparing Nurseries* for a more detailed description.

[26]Christopherson ibid

[27]Also in New Zealand, where the Teachers' Union very actively lobbied on behalf of all childcare workers, as well as teachers, and was a key player in pushing for the unified approach to services and in the development of training and curriculum. New Zealand.

[28]Penn, H (1997). *Childcare as a Gendered Occupation*. DfEE Research Report RR23. This study of training offered to childcare workers in the UK suggested amongst other issues, that the lower the qualification and status of the worker, the less likely she was to see any benefits in unionization.

Ecology and the environment

In some countries ecological and environmental considerations loom large in the provision of out-of-home care for young children. These considerations include general concern about the environment and the extent to which it facilitates the wellbeing and safety of those who care for young children; concern for child care as an aesthetic environment; and the extent to which regard for the environment is a curricular issue.

The wider environment

Children and their parents have to reach out-of-home care, but streets are often dangerous places because of the movement of traffic, noxious fumes, loose dogs and other obstacles. A number of countries, most notably Scandinavia, the Netherlands and Germany have had long-term planning policies which enhance the mobility of those with young children. The most obvious of these is off-road cycling. Cycling is potentially one of cheapest and healthiest forms of transport, but is frequently unsafe and noxious where bicycles must compete with cars and other motorized transport. All the above countries have comprehensive networks of off-road cycling, and the profile of cyclists has changed dramatically — the most frequent users of bicycles are women with young children, children themselves and the elderly. The air is cleaner, and cars are less necessary, both for the parents who bring children or for the professionals who work in services, and car parking facilities are not provided at child care centres, leaving more space for other activities.[1]

As well as traffic control, planning policies which are focused on the needs of young children deal with housing zoning, and provision of safe community playspace. There are also some important Government-led initiatives, most notably the Ministry of Culture projects in France, discussed above, and the Ministry of Welfare Projects in Spain.[2]

Environmental issues may also include landscaping and land use, waste disposal, and various measures to curb the use of chemical effluents in water, controls over the use

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[1]The City of Frankfurt for example has extensive child care provision, and has an explicit policy of discouraging car travel — no nurseries have car parking spaces.

[2]Ministerio de Asuntos Sociales (1996). *Espacios Abiertos para la Infancia*. Madrid. Ministry of Welfare.

of bio-genetically altered foods[3] and concerns about the uses of nuclear energy and disposal of nuclear waste. In many countries there are environmental advocacy organizations which promote young children's interests, and stress the importance of a variety of ecological measures to enhance local environments in the interests of children.[4] In Finland:

> *the child's play environment and equipment are a sphere which greatly interests Finnish designers, and in urban communities in particular people are now demanding higher quality and more stimulus from the places where their children play, together with more money to build them. On the other hand, Finnish children still have a great deal of unspoiled countryside within easy reach to provide a natural framework for their games.* [5]

In Denmark a system of "forest kindergartens" has been developed, whereby children, in winter and summer alike, are provided with transport to go to forest kindergartens, small campsites in open spaces on the edge of cities.

The aesthetics of child care

Mark Dudek, in his book *Kindergarten Architecture*, reviews the kinds of built spaces available for young children across Europe and further afield. [6] In a number of countries nursery or crèche provision is regarded as an important public service, meriting a distinctive architecture of its own. The most well known of these programmes is the Frankfurt city kindergarten programme, where 35 new kindergartens have been commissioned from innovative architects whose brief was to design kindergartens which appeal to children. In addition the programme emphasizes ecological environments, and where possible solar heating, recycled water, and sustainable local building materials are used.[7]

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[3]One large private nursery chain in the UK has designed an ecological nappy shredder, and negotiated with local river authorities about treatment and discharge of the end product.

[4]For instance the Research Institute for the Built Environment, University of Helsinki has had an acknowledged influence on planning for children in Finland; NAVIR, a non-governmental environmental and research organization based in Paris has worked with the Ministry of Culture looking at children's "spaces;" and "Learning through Landscapes" a voluntary organization has been active in the UK

[5]Central Union for Child Welfare in Finland.(1983). *Childhood in Finland*. Helsinki.

[6]Dudek, M. (1996). *Kindergarten Architecture*. London. E. Spon.

[7]Burgard, R (1999). *The Frankfurt Kindergartens Programme*. in (ed) H. Penn: *Early Childhood Services: Theory, Policy and Practice*. Milton Keynes. Open University Press. Forthcoming.

The concern with the aesthetics of the building extends to the individual rooms within it, and the uses of toys, other materials, and display. Goldschmied and Jackson argue that in a UK context, because of poor funding, provisioning is often ill-thought out and ugly: [8]

> *Many rooms have furniture which is not the right shape, cushions and curtains of colours and textures which do not add up to any harmonious scheme, and which most of us would not tolerate in our own homes...we are often content for children to spend their most formative years surrounded by ugliness and clutter(p.17).*

In a number of countries the rooms where children are cared for are characterized by restrained display, avoidance of stereotypic cartoon figures like Mickey Mouse, and absence of any garish colours. For example, Swedish nurseries typically as a matter of policy decorate nurseries as a Swedish style home, with adult furniture, and relatively few pieces of child furniture, wooden floors, woven rugs, plain curtains, and a minimum of patterned surfaces. The Italian nurseries described in *Comparing Nurseries*, were conceived as aesthetic environments, where surface textures were carefully judged, and space and light deliberately used to create an elegant environment. The European Childcare Network video also emphasizes the aesthetic and architectural qualities of provision for young children in the cities of Reggio Emilia in Italy and Aarhus in Denmark.

The environment in the curriculum

Curricular planning is devolved to the level of the day care centre in Finland and Denmark, and although centres may differ considerably, from one another learning to care for and cherish the environment is a regular theme. The importance of a sustainable environment, of re-using and recycling materials, of being careful with growing plants, and where possible of cultivating vegetables and fruit, of obtaining books for children which stress care of the environment, all feature in provision, even for the youngest children. The forest kindergartens, described above, are a useful starting point for environmental play and discussion. In Finland *"special attention is given to the need for day care that implants in the child a sense of social responsibility, understanding of the need for*

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[8]Goldschmied and Jackson, ibid.

peace, and concern for the environment."[9] Considerable attention is paid to developing stories and story books, which have an environmental focus.[10]

These environmental and ecological themes are gradually gaining currency in many European countries, most notably in Scandinavia, and in Germany where there is a sizeable green movement.

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[9]Central Union for Child Welfare, ibid.

[10]National Research and Developmental Centre for Welfare and Health.(1997). *Children from 0-7: Care and Education Services in Finland.* Helsinki.

Where now?

The discussion presented here has been mainly based on policy and practice documents. However, if one were to widen the debate to look at recent theoretical ideas in areas such as situated learning,[1] cultural psychology,[2] and culture theory and ethnography,[3] all of which have been suggested as fruitful avenues for further research, different pictures may emerge. Add to this the fact that about 5% of the world's children live in North America, and another 12% in Western Europe, and the majority of the world's children live in very different circumstances from this privileged 17%. In order to talk more conclusively about very young children, we would have to consider a very wide range of evidence indeed about how societies bring up young children.

For example, Howard Gardner has famously claimed that there are seven different kinds of intelligences: linguistic; spatial; logico-mathematical; bodily kinaesthetic; musical; interpersonal; and intrapersonal.[4] He suggests that in a Euro-American context we traditionally emphasize linguistic, logico-mathematical and intrapersonal (i.e., defining and understanding one's feelings about oneself — self-esteem) intelligences, but pay relatively little attention to spatial, musical, or bodily-kinaesthetic or inter-personal (emotional) intelligence. He also argues that there are at least four different kinds of learning; imitation or observation; master-apprentice; rote learning; and modern "child-centred" learning. He claims that all of these methods of learning are embedded in time and place, and in their context may be very successful — for example the rote learning traditions of rabbinical and Koranic schools have produced some extraordinary scholarship. As I suggested in the introduction with the story of Mothibi, many children must negotiate several worlds, and as they grow up, must learn to switch between these competing and complex understandings of what the adults around them consider to be important.

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[1]Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (1992). *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

[2]Cole, M. (1996). *Cultural Psychology*. Cambridge, Mass. Bellknap Press/Harvard Press.

[3](eds). Stigler, J.W., Shweder, R.A. and Herdt, G. (1990). *Cultural Psychology: Essays on Comparative Human Development*. Chicago. Chicago University Press.

[4]Gardner, H. (1984). *The Development of Competence in Culturally Defined Domains*. in (eds) R Shweder and R Levine. *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self and Emotion*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. pp 257-275.

But even within a relatively narrow European context, it is obvious that there is considerable divergence. Ideas such as attachment which are very powerful as a guiding principle in some circumstances, in other circumstances may be deemed far less important. So can we make any suggestions about what is useful? From this review a number of issues emerge.

Reflective practitioners

The very diversity of existing practices suggests that it is important not to be dogmatic about what we offer young children. Instead we should be constructively critical about what is available, alert to alternatives, open to discussion and questioning, prepared to experiment and document the outcomes of those experiments — and have the time to do all this. This is the antithesis of an approach which specifies pre-ordained quality standards, and assesses competencies based on those standards. Whilst it may be useful to have benchmarks and establish a consensus about minimum standards in certain contexts, to rely entirely on such fixed criteria diminishes rather than enhances practice.

Groups and social competencies

One of the most striking aspects about some continental systems of out-of-home care is the extent to which they focus on harmonious group relationships, not merely in the sense of avoiding conflict, but in the positive sense of creating solidarity. From this perspective, an individualistic approach, in which mother child relationships, or their substitutes, are the primary focus of intervention, is limiting; both adults and children manage their lives better as part of a wider and supportive group nexus. To use Goldschmied and Jackson's tactic of reasoning from adult relationships, it would be highly stressful to come to work each day and find a different group of work colleagues; yet in the Anglo-American literature little consideration is given to young children in out-of-home care who may face a different group of children each day. In those systems which emphasize group care, typically there are very small groups of children (in their own rooms or bases, at least for part of the time) and regular (not necessarily full-time) daily attendance, so friendships can be established and maintained. Relationships which already exist, such as sibling relationships are supported and activities or projects developed which children undertake as a group, or together, rather than solitary activities. Adults themselves through their own relationships and conversations and

comments, as well as in their dialogues with children, consciously promote group solidarity.

Health and wellbeing

Health is perceived as a very broad issue in some countries, not merely as the prevention of health risks and dangers in the immediate environment, but as the positive promotion of well-being and bodily care. The self, or mind, is not perceived as something inside of the body, which can be addressed separately from it, as an exclusive emphasis on cognition and learning seems to imply; but fully functioning fully utilized bodies are a pleasurable part of the self and integral to learning. A sense of well-being comes from being happy, stimulated and relaxed, but is also achieved through good eating, challenging exercise and rest.

Education

Language acquisition is a critical aspect of learning, and many countries have sophisticated language policies, although those whose mother tongue is a low-status language have tended to be less well treated. There is perceived to be a limit to the extent to which it is necessary to have specially devised toys and materials to promote learning; instead ordinary everyday activities and materials can be effective. Learning is regarded not as a bombardment of external stimuli, which children must master, often competitively, so they can exercise "choice"; but as a more gradual, casual and continuous process in which children learn what is important to other children and adults around them, as much as about the properties of external objects. Those children whose pace of learning is much slower, because they have a disability, can still benefit from inclusion in a supportive group setting.

The local context

Many more recent projects in infant care and early childhood have stressed social ecology, that is the importance of reflecting the richness and variety of what goes on locally. Places where young children are cared and looked after are not separate and segregated. They use formal and informal staffing arrangements — sharing responsibility for planning, organizing and working with parents, grandparents and others in the community who reflect its generations, ethnicity, gender and linguistic and cultural

values. They provide a wide range of activities for young children many of which involve participation in every day local events, from shopping to local business[5]. This is much easier to achieve in small homogenous self-contained and long-standing communities, with living historical roots, as for example in the famous Reggio Emilia nurseries; but it is also possible to achieve in areas which are socially mixed or even where there is great poverty.[6]

The environment

Alarms about the health of the planet appear every day: global warming, a thinning ozone layer, acid rain, water pollution, nuclear contamination, genetically modified and highly processed foods, destruction of wildlife and extinction of species — to name but a few! Some countries now consider environmental issues to be of paramount importance, and regard early childhood services as the first step in instilling respect for the environment. From this point of view the environment cannot be ignored, it must be actively cherished. This is manifested in ecologically constructed buildings, a careful attention to the aesthetics of external and internal space, a cautious view of consumption and waste and the use of natural and biodegradable materials wherever possible, and a conscious and careful use of wild or uncultivated woods and other open spaces.

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[5] In *Private Nurseries in the UK* (BBC Panorama 1994) I describe a nursery which persuaded the local car hire firm to lend them a Daimler car. An elderly lady from a neighbouring sheltered housing unit dressed up as the Queen Mother, and the Daimler took her and several children around the town, all waiving graciously at passers by. Then she came back to a regal tea in the nursery. This event triggered much discussion and games in the nursery

[6] The Misericordia centre in the Portuguese suburb of Cascais, which takes children from 0-16, and is open from 7am to 6pm, and works in the Freinet tradition (see above). It attracts children from the richest professional families as well as those of extremely poor Angolan refugees; and the people who work in this centre also come from a variety of backgrounds, including Angolan men. The centre has links with local newspapers and newsagents, and the local pottery, runs a dance studio; and is a base for organizing local carnivals.

Summary

There are a variety of approaches to infant care. A few of these are particular to very young children, but many of them are part of a wider view about early childhood, or children more generally, and their place and status in society; and indeed about the mores of society itself. Very few of these approaches are known or considered as serious within the Anglo-American literature, and have not been systematically or rigorously evaluated — indeed it would be very hard to compare them without taking account of their value bases and the systems of early childhood services in which they are located. This does not necessarily diminish their importance as alternative views of practice; it may well be useful to look beyond conventional paradigms and understandings.

If we were to look still wider than the practices described here, then there are other forms of bringing up infants in which the notion of intelligence is radically different from a minority (Western) world insistence on "self-confident loquaciousness" as a goal for children.[7] Like others, I have commented on the extraordinary — and informal — musical education of young children in South Africa, where even very young children's sense of harmony, pitch , rhythm and movement is quite remarkable by minority world standards.[8] Other writers have commented on the distinctive ways in which certain societies create children who show little, if any, aggressive behaviour, and where co-operation and independence are learnt as much through touch and kinaesthetic means, as through language.[9] Yet again, young children's stamina, hardiness and spatial ability in negotiating their environment is very different in nomadic or pastoralist societies from anything we commonly think might be possible in the urbanized minority world.[10] Childhood is a reflection of adulthood. As the French anthropologist Jaqueline Rabain has commented:

> *To describe how the child is socialized, to grasp how it acquires its social ways of being, amounts to recording and studying the teaching and learning of the cultural code; this code*

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[7] Levine, R., Dixon, S., Levine, S., Richman, A., Leiderman, P.H., Keefer, C., & Brazelton,T. (1994). *Childcare and Culture: Lessons from Africa*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

[8] Blacking, J (1988). *Dance and Music in Venda Children's Cognitive Development* in (eds) G. Jahoda and I. Lewis: *Acquiring Culture: Cross Cultural Studies in Child Development*. London. Croom Helm. Penn, H.(1997). *Inclusivity and diversity in early childhood services in South Africa*. International Journal of Inclusive Education. V.1. No.1. pp 101-114.

[9] Montague, A.(1978). *Learning non-aggression*. Oxford. Oxford University Press

[10] Penn, H. (1998). *Conceptions of Childhood in Pastoralist Communities in Mongolia*. Paper given at the Childhood Research and Policy Centre, Institute of Education, University of London. June 1998.

we shall define for the moment, and very generally, as a collection of verbal or non-verbal rules of conduct, by which society recognizes one of its members.(p.25)[11]

But in today's world, there is constant overlap. Far from living closed and static lives in a particular community, most people's lives, even in situations which may appear remote, conservative and unchanging, are characterized by processes of change, internal inconsistencies, conflicts and contradictions; their behaviour demonstrates ambiguity, spontaneity and improvization. So instead of assuming there is one best practice which suits us all, it seems important to recognize, explore and discuss the "arc of human possibilities".

[11]Rabain, J. (1975). L'enfant du lignage. Paris. Payot.

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The Childcare Resource and Research Unit at the Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto, is a policy and research oriented facility which focuses on child care. The Childcare Resource and Research Unit maintains a comprehensive library and computerized catalogue (both are available to the public); maintains a website, provides consultation on policy, research and other projects; and produces an Occasional Paper series and other publications. Students, advocates, service providers, policy makers and others with an interest in child care may use its facilities and resources.

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